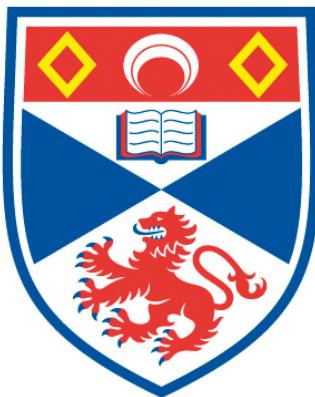


**THE DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMIC POLITICAL THOUGHT  
IN RELATION TO THE WEST DURING THE MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY**

**Christopher LaRossa**

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD  
at the  
University of St Andrews**

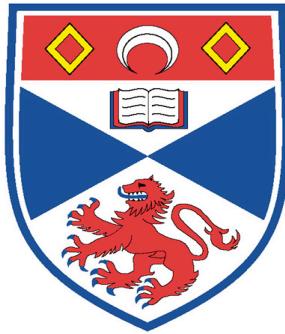


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University  
of  
St Andrews

**The Development of Islamic Political Thought**  
**In Relation to the West During the Mid-Twentieth Century**

Christopher LaRossa

A Thesis for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of History

St Leonard's College

University of St Andrews

25 June 2010

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I **Christopher LaRossa**, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 80,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree

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### **Abstract**

This research is about the development of Islamic political thought in relation to the West during the mid-twentieth century. It utilizes the ideas and writings of the Islamic thinkers Sayyid Qutb of Egypt, Ali Shariati of Iran, and Jalal Al-e Ahmad of Iran to illustrate this development. These figures reacted severely to Westernization (argued to constitute colonialism, materialism, and secularism) as they saw it. This research will argue that their reaction was due to the fatally corrosive effects each figure believed this was having upon Islamic civil society and the Islamic moral economy, both in their respective home homelands and throughout the greater global Ummah. Their perspective is unique because they were critiquing the West based upon their experiences while in the West, and using Western intellectual ideas to do so. This was done, this research contends, in reaction to aspects of Edward Said's Orientalism discourse. Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad's reaction to the West, this research also argues, displays aspects of Friedrich Nietzsche's thought, namely that when an entity (in this case, Islam) encounters the West, God is lost in that encounter. Additionally, this research argues that Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad sought to counter the loss of God in Islamic civil society and halt the influence of Westernization as they saw it via the political realm through the use of the Quran as law and government, thereby permanently restoring God to Islamic civil society and salvaging the Islamic moral economy.

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**Dedication**

This research is dedicated to the following people: John and Gretchen LaRossa; Fr. Frank Murphy, a scholar and a friend; Mr. Brian Shannon, for helping transform Notre Dame from a dream into a reality; Sgt. Matt Eversman and the members of Task Force Ranger, Somalia 1993, for unparalleled inspiration.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **I. Statement of Thesis**

This research is about the development of Islamic political thought in relation to the West during the mid-twentieth century. It is primarily concerned with the interaction of ideas and the method and circumstances for creating and disseminating these ideas.

The impact of ideas is also of critical concern in the following context: Islam's relationship with politics and ultimately with the catalyst for the creation of these ideas, the West. The severe reaction of Islamic thinkers Sayyid Qutb of Egypt, Ali Shariati of Iran, and Jalal Al-e Ahmad of Iran against Westernization (argued to constitute colonialism, materialism, and secularism) as they saw it, will be utilized to illustrate this.

The research presented here will argue that these thinkers reacted in this manner because of the fatally corrosive effects each figure believed this was having upon Islamic civil society and the Islamic moral economy, both in their respective home countries and throughout the greater global Ummah. Their perspective is unique because they were critiquing the West based upon their experiences while in the West, and using Western intellectual ideas to do so. This was done, this research contends, in reaction to aspects of orientalism, particularly as later articulated by Edward Said. This research also argues that Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad's reaction to the West displays aspects of Friedrich Nietzsche's thought, namely that when an entity (in this research, Islam) encounters the West, God is lost in that encounter. Additionally, this research argues that Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad sought to counter the loss of God in Islamic civil society and halt the influence of Westernization as they saw it via the political realm: instituting the Quran as

law and government, thereby permanently restoring God to Islamic civil society and salvaging the Islamic moral economy.

The time period examined in this research is the mid-twentieth century. This represents when these thinkers were active and developed a substantial corpus of anti-Western rhetoric. The mid-twentieth century also represents the time by which much of the Westernization as each figure saw it, had a chance to filter down to, and impact, both government and the majority of Islamic civil society in each thinkers respective country, in addition to the global Ummah.

#### *A. Methodology for Validating Arguments Proposed in this Research*

The validation for the arguments set forth in this research will be undertaken through a critical examination of the writings of Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad that deal with the development of Islamic political thought in relation to the West. Each relevant primary source will be examined for: 1.) its reliance upon the ideational structures of Marx, Engels, Foucault, and Gramsci in construction arguments for the critique of the West and for the enactment of change in Islamic civil society; 2.) its arguments against aspects of orientalism; 3.) its use of Nietzsche's idea of the West as God-less to react against Westernization as each figure saw it, and for the part it played in the erosion of Islamic civil society and the Islamic moral economy; 4.) its political solution to the perceived problem(s) the global Ummah faced at the hands of the West and Westernization, namely the use of Islam and the Quran as government and law.

It is also incumbent to keep in mind when examining the ideas and writings of these figures that at times, Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad must be differentiated as a group and as individuals. As a group, they are the intellectual successors of Jamal al-Din

al-Afghani in terms of amending his practical application of Muslim solidarity, pan-Islam. Also as a group, Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad had a first-hand encounter with the West. The encounter with the West was the same for each; it was a first-hand encounter. The result of that encounter was also the same: a negative encounter that resulted in one figures production of a nearly indistinguishable corpus of anti-Western thought from the others. Hence, the end result of the encounter with the West was the same for each figure: the production of a body of ideas labeling the West as *the* enemy of Islam, and positing a solution to the problem(s) faced by the global Ummah at the hands of the West and Westernization as they saw it. As such, Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad can be classified as a group.

However, the circumstances of that encounter with the West is what classifies them as individuals – each figure had a different set of circumstances while they were encountering the West in the West. While the end result was the same in terms of ideas, the circumstances of their encounters with the West were different for Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad. In other words, the end product of their encounter was the same; the ideas that lead to the creation of the end product were the same; but how each figure arrived at those ideas was different for each figure. It is the circumstances of each figure's encounter with the West that allows Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad to be viewed as individuals. Hence, it is appropriate at times to distinguish between Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad acting as a group or individuals when examining the development of Islamic political thought in relation to the West in the mid-twentieth century.

### ***B. Purpose and Explanation***

The purpose of this research is to contribute to the existing knowledge regarding the development of Islamic political thought, or Islamism. The unique aspect that this research will contribute lies in the presentation of Qutb's, Shariati's, and Al-e Ahmad's encounter with, and reaction to, the West during the mid-twentieth century. It is important to note here that this research will regard the encounter of each figure as the same: their encounter was with the West. It is the circumstances of that encounter which changes for each figure, hence giving a unique dimension to each figure's response to the West. The work of Charles Tripp, Islam and the Moral Economy, is extremely important here, in that he has initiated this part of the conversation. However, while his work deals with a specific aspect of the West, capitalism, this research will broaden the dialogue to include colonialism, materialism, and secularism, (as Westernization) and the perceived effect upon the greater Islamic moral economy.

Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad were selected for this research because of their first-hand encounters with the West. Their ideas regarding colonialism, materialism, and secularism are important in that these “-isms”, as they saw them, were impacting Islamic civil society and the Islamic moral economy (which lies within Islamic civil society) in a significantly negative manner. This included both the Muslim communities in their respective home countries and the greater global Ummah. Hence, they promoted the Nietzschean paradigm regarding God being lost in the West, but also now expanded this to include God beginning to be lost in the micro and macro Ummah.

As this research deals primarily with ideology, it is incumbent to break down that ideology into three aspects: the causal encounter, the creation and dissemination of

ideational challenges, and the ideology itself. In investigating each figure, the following questions will be examined: what was the encounter that caused each thinker to develop their anti-Western rhetoric? What ideational encounter with the West made them develop a radical strain in their ideology, thereby pushing Islamic political thought in a more radical direction? What was the anti-Western ideology that developed as a result? What was each thinker trying to show or prove about their encounter with the West? These questions will be answered by examining the writings and thought of Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad. The emphasis of this research when examining these questions will be upon the relation between Islam with the West but more importantly how these figures saw that relationship. Islamic figures in the twentieth century viewed this relationship differently depending upon the circumstances in which they encountered the West. Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad were, for all intents and purposes, anti-Western thinkers. And though they were of different Islamic denominations (Qutb was Sunni, Shariati and Al-e Ahmad were Shi'ite) their anti-Western thought provided a bridge between the Sunni-Shi'a divide, a notion which will be expanded upon later in this research. In many ways, it was their own relationship(s) with the West that determined their anti-Western stances but laid a unifying foundation for pushing Islamic political thought in a more radical direction.

## **II. Importance of Research**

As previously mentioned, this research is an examination of a significantly important time in the development of Islamic political thought. It is an examination of this development in relation to the West. As such, there has been no prior research on these three specific individuals as a group in the formation of a corpus of thought based upon primary encounters with West. It is important to focus on this development in relation to the West because the interaction with the West played such a pivotal role in the development of twentieth century Islamic political thought. The ideas of Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad, through their principal encounters with the West, helped facilitate the restoration of God into modern Muslim politics. Additionally, their ideas attempted to re-center and re-focus the Islamic moral economy away from materialism, and secularism, which they saw as the backbone of Western politics and Westernization. Their ideas labeled the West as the enemy of Islam par excellence, and provided a bridge toward unification between the Sunni- Shi'a divide. The new perspective which this research provides centers on the above, and how their thoughts and the interaction of ideas about the West helped to further the development of Islamic political thought.

The importance of this research also lies in its examination of why Qutb, Shariati, and Ahmad were so angry with the West. Their encounters had such a profound effect upon them that they dedicated their lives to try and stop the influence and corrosive forces of the West *as they saw them*. In all cases, this pursuit and dedication would ultimately cost them their lives. Qutb was executed by Nasser in 1966, and Shariati died in London in 1977. Though the case remains open, British police believe Shariati's assassination was perpetuated by the Iranian secret police, SAVAK. Al-e Ahmad died in

1969. His brother still maintains that he was assassinated by SAVAK, and has written so in an article in the Iranian publication Javan in 1979. Their deaths, though, did not stop the ideas they espoused from germinating and shaping later generations of Muslim thinkers who sympathized with them. The interpretation of the religion of Islam in a radical manner, the transmission and enactment of ideologies from one generation to another in a very real and actual way, the use of violence as a means of expressing that ideology, and a livid hatred of Islam's encounter with "the West" were all represented in their writings. In researching this particular aspect of Islamic political thought, and in understanding why and where these figures' antagonism came from, benefits abound. Three of the most significant of these benefits are (in no particular order): 1. that dialogue can be constructed and communication undertaken between the West (the US and Europe) and future figures who espouse similar ideas as Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad; 2. predictions can be made as to how future Islamists might act; 3. by understanding where these figures' anger arose from, something about the West is also revealed, thereby enabling participation in policies that create less friction between the West and Islam/ the Arab world.

### **III. Definition of Terms**

In this research, *the West* will be geographically defined as both the US and Europe. In order to critically understand the 'who' and the 'why' of the anger and frustration of Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad, it is paramount to refer to the West as both of these entities. In due course when dealing with each figure, specification of either the US or Europe will be made when necessary. *The West* also represents an idea; an idea

that encompasses, in part, capitalism, materialism, secularism, and colonialism as the ideals that govern civil society and can influence a moral economy. *Westernization* also is comprised of these ideals, and particularly the exporting of these ideals (or the idea of the West) to non-Western lands. Hence, the two definitions are inter-related. This research will use Oren's, Tilly's, Giddens's, Lefebvre's, and Scott's definition of Westernization as capitalism, materialism, and secularism and their exportation.

The term *Islamists* is also important for this research. Typically, Islamists are those figures who have blended Islam and politics in a non-static way. In his Oxford Dictionary of Islam, John Esposito defines Islamist as “an Islamic political or social activist...Islamists are committed to the implementation of their ideological vision of Islam in the state and/or society. Their position is often seen as a critique of the establishment and status quo.”<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this research, Esposito’s definition will be utilized.

*Ideology* is arguably *the* most important term in the scope of the development of Islamic political thought. How ideas interact and develop is crucial towards attaining an understanding of how Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad developed Islamic political thought, particularly in relation to the West. Thinkers such as Marx, Engels, Foucault, and Gramsci provide an excellent background for the explanation of ideology as the creation of a cerebral and abstract corpus of thought that has the potential to be transformed into doctrine. In this manner, aspects of their thought will be relied upon heavily for their interpretations of ideology and the interaction of ideas. Marx, Engels, Foucault, and Gramsci also harmonize nicely with the definition of ideology posited by Clifford Geertz in The Interpretation of Cultures. Geertz’s defines ideology as “maps of

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<sup>1</sup> Esposito, John L. The Oxford Dictionary of Islam. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

problematic social reality and matrices for the creation of collective conscience.”<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this research, Geertz’s definition will be utilized, and supplemented by Marx, Engels, Foucault, and Gramsci at the appropriate time.

As those who create and espouse an ideology, Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad are ideologues. These three figures depend heavily upon the Quran to provide a foundation for their thought. In doing so, and in creating their respective ideologies, they are acting as their own interpreters of Quranic scripture. While they may rely, in part, on Quranic interpreters from the past, they are for all intents and purposes producing their own interpretations of Quranic scripture, and implementing that into their thought. For the nature of this research, these figures will *not* be referred to as *exegetes*. In the Western conception of the term *exegete*, it is usually considered a requirement that to be referred to as such, one must have some qualification or a degree from an accredited religious institution or seminary. The same holds true within Islam. Qutb, Shariati, and Ahmad did not have such degrees or religious accreditation, though they may have studied religion (especially Islam) at some point in their lives. Accredited or not, this did not stop them from conducting what was in their own minds ‘exegesis.’

Clifford Geertz also postulated a definition of *religion* in his work The Interpretation of Cultures. He defined religion as “a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, persuasive, and long lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.”<sup>3</sup> Symbols for Geertz are tangible constructions of abstract

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<sup>2</sup> Geertz, Clifford. The Interpretation of Cultures. New York: Basic Books, 1973, p. 220.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

notions, while motivations are persisting tendencies and moods are feelings.<sup>4</sup> This definition will be assimilated into, and expanded to include, Robert Bellah's definition of religion from his work Beyond Belief. For Bellah, religion is "the most general mechanism for integrating meaning and motivation in action systems."<sup>5</sup> This research will utilize both Geertz's and Bellah's definition of religion, but develop it to include the Quran.

*Faith*, an important part of Qutb, Sharaiati, and Al-e Ahmad's thought rests within the capacity of the individual to believe in an abstract concept. No empirical data can be used in the formulation of one's faith. It is entirely intangible.

The definition of the *Islamic moral economy* will be supplied by Charles Tripp from his work Islam and the Moral Economy. The Islamic moral economy is essentially the behavioral consciousness of Muslims. It encompasses all the non-material aspects and values of life in Muslim society. Ultimately, it is a way of acting and thinking, of being and living. The *Islamic moral economy* is a part of the overall Islamic civil society, yet is its own entity. This research will also use Tripp's notion of *Islamic civil society* as representative of the institutions (governmental, economic, cultural, educational, religious, legal etc.) and those who run these institutions that enable and aid in the functioning of day-to-day life of the greater Ummah.

The definition of God is also important to this research. Nietzsche defines God in his writings The Birth of Tragedy, Unfashionable Observations, and The Gay Science in the Christian monotheistic sense: the supreme *triune* being who provides value, meaning, and guidance to all life, and where secular society is tolerated. Qutb, Sharaiati, and Al-e

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96-97.

<sup>5</sup> Bellah, Robert. Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditionalist World. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1970 p. 12.

Ahmad, though from differing denominations of Islam, define God through their writings in the monotheistic Islamic sense, the supreme being who provides meaning, value, and guidance to all life. They argue for a non-secular society, where no human ruler has earthly or spiritual sovereignty over God.

#### **IV. Ideational Structures**

##### Methodology and Approach

This research will draw on the following methods of thought in its argument. Karl Marx and Friederich Engels wrote that society is composed of two classes, the bourgeois and the proletariat. It is incumbent on the proletariat to enact change in civil society, as they have a pre-existing revolutionary capacity within. The way to enact change in civil society was through unionization, then physical revolution. Michel Foucault believed that ideas are much more important than physical actions, and therefore that ideology is a much more important tool for the enacting of a revolution than physicality. Antonio Gramsci, however, believes that revolution is necessary to enact change in civil society, but believed that this revolution should be ideological in nature, rather than physical.

Friederich Nietzsche represents the ideational apex of this research and argument. He developed the idea throughout his various writings that when any entity encounters the West, in whatever form the West may be (for the purposes of this research, it is the US and/or Europe), something vital is lost in that encounter. For Nietzsche, what was lost was God. Because of the afore-mentioned materialistic, imperialistic, and colonial outlooks and influences that Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad felt was the backbone of

Western society, this research will argue that Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad felt God was lacking in the West in all manners of life and government. They also believed that because of these influences the West brought to the Middle East, God was becoming lost to Muslims (both in the Middle East and in the global Ummah). Hence this research postulates that Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad had a very Nietzschean outlook in this regard. In the process of developing the corpus of Islamic political thought, Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad sought to use Islam itself as the tool by which the threats of the West, as they saw them, could be neutralized and destroyed. Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad believed that within Islam and within the Quran, there was no separating life into various segments, i.e. government, morals/ethics, economics, etc. This meant that there was no separating out of God from *any* such facet of life. For Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad, the way to counter the influence of the West was to enact change in Islamic civil society, and by proxy, the Islamic moral economy. The most potent way to accomplish this they believed lay in the transfer, use, and interaction of ideas, particularly in the realm of politics.

#### A. The Interaction of Ideas

In understanding the development of Islamic political thought, it is critically important to understand how ideas work and how ideology functions and is transmitted. The challenge that lay before Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad was a daunting one, but one that was of the utmost importance, for in the conquering of that challenge lay what they believed was the way forward for the Ummah. These thinkers ultimately had to relate to their fellow Muslims the perceived fact that the West was at the root of all Islam's ills. Yet they had to do so in such a convincing manner so as to be followed with

zeal. Hence, their ideational challenge was tri-fold. First, they had to create a corpus of thought (preferably original and Islamically indigenous) depicting Islam as being threatened – it was being overtaken by the West, a force that had corruption and godlessness at its heart. Second, they had to identify who their audience was. Would it be more beneficial to appeal to those in the governments of Egypt and Iran, or to ordinary Muslims? Given Qutb's negative experiences in the US, the Egyptian Ministry of Education, and with President Nasser, and with Shariati's and Al-e Ahmad's disdain for the Shah in Iran, the decision was clear. Third, they had to make this corpus of thought accessible to their chosen audience. The third ideational challenge was arguably the most important: how to transmit these feelings, and to interact with the Ummah so as to show them how corrosive and destructive the West really was.

In terms of explaining the background to the ideological challenges that lay before Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad, an examination of Marx and Engels, Foucault, and Gramsci must be undertaken first. During this investigation, it is important to keep in mind what Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad ultimately were trying to do: enact change upon civil society from within the Ummah. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels believed that society was divided into two classes, the bourgeois and the proletariat. Essentially the bourgeois was comprised of those in the ruling class, while the proletariat was made up of the working class, and hence the lesser of the two classes. Marx saw the proletariat as having a revolutionary potential. In other words, he believed it was incumbent upon the proletariat to change their status in civil society by usurping the bourgeois. For Marx and Engels, the way to enact this change was by physical revolution. Yet in order to espouse such a stance, they had to impress this ideologically upon the proletariat. Michel

Foucault would not have agreed with either Marx or Engels on their position regarding physical revolution. Foucault was much more concerned with the mental than the physical. He believed that the mind was the medium upon which ideas must be inscribed. In other words, Foucault was an advocate for change wholly through ideological means. Antonio Gramsci, however, seems to provide somewhat of a balance between Marx and Engels, and Foucault. Gramsci, like Marx and Engels, believed that revolution was necessary to enact change upon and within civil society. However, like Foucault, Gramsci sought to institute this change by relying on the mind. Gramsci, then, was a believer in ideology rather than physical action. Intellectual activity therefore represented the best method of reaching and connecting with the citizens of a society. Gramsci thought this would inspire a sense of solidarity among citizens, thereby producing change in the social climate.

It seems fair to say that despite the various approaches and views on revolution argued by Marx and Engels, Foucault, and Gramsci, the commonality amongst them lies in the fact that they are all proponents of providing some form of philosophical justification before taking action. This is an extremely important notion in the scope of this research. An equally important notion is how the past forms, directs, impacts, and influences a contemporary ideology. That ideology, in turn, has the capacity to direct what will be the history of that time period. Hence, the past and ideology are intimately connected elements in the composition of history. In a passage written in 1851 as part of The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, Marx elaborated on the significance of the relationship between the past and history. He wrote:

“Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionizing themselves and things, in creating something entirely new, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honored disguise and this borrowed language.”<sup>6</sup>

Marx, here, is not making the argument that man is indeed incapable of making his/her own history. What is at issue, rather, is that the palate upon which man makes that history comes from the past. It is not a clean or a clear palate. That is what Marx is ultimately arguing. In other words, the current era in which man acts was determined by the past. Revolution for Marx is an attempt to clear that palate and to branch out anew. It is an attempt to react to the past for the betterment of the present and the future.

Yet Marx remarks that exactly at the moment when change or revolution is to take place, the past again comes into play, albeit negatively. For Marx, the past in this regard is restrictive. It is a weight that holds back the promise of the revolution and change. Why is this so? One answer, out of many, seems to suit the purposes of this research. Elements and notions of the past are reconstituted in a period of revolution and change in order to lend a sense of legitimacy to that change. It is, in essence, an attempt at justification for revolution. The “names” and “battle slogans” of the past are used as a guide that promotes confidence and recalls historical precedent. This is exactly what Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad did when developing their corpus of thought. They called upon the one name central to the past of all Muslims, the Prophet Muhammad, in an effort to legitimize their own ideology. Additionally, they drew upon the first Caliphs as historical figures and the period of the Rashidun as the model time of the Ummah. It

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<sup>6</sup> Marx, Karl *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* from Tucker, Robert C. ed. The Marx-Engels Reader. New York: Norton, 1978 p. 595.

is these figures and this time, according to Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad, which must be emulated and re-instituted into the current Ummah's world to stop the corrosive influence of the West.

Despite the desire for legitimacy, Marx feels that the calling upon of the past damages the new-ness of the revolution and ideas of change. He sees them as tainting the development of an authentic and original message. He uses idioms such as "disguise" and "borrowed" to depict what he calls the "new scene of world history." As something that has vast potential, the new-ness of change should be left to inspire those who institute it and those whom it will hopefully effect positively. Even so, Marx recognizes that history is not something to be dismissed lightly. Only a little more than a hundred years after these words were penned, Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad would prove what Marx wrote to be true.

#### B. *The Interaction of Ideas: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels*

##### *1. Civil Society and its Inhabitants*

At the behest of the Central Committee of the Communist League of Europe, Marx and Engels in their 1848 Manifesto of the Communist Party set down a series of statements intended to unify the disparate factions of the League itself.<sup>7</sup> What they actually wrote was a theory of historical materialism. Perhaps more importantly for the purposes of this research, Marx and Engels put forth a philosophical justification for the enactment of change in civil society. But how is civil society defined? For that we must look to earlier writings. Marx wrote simply in his Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right that "the citizens of the state are members of families and members

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<sup>7</sup> Bender, Frederick L. *Historical and Theoretical Backgrounds of the Communist Manifesto* from Bender, Frederick L. ed. Karl Marx: The Communist Manifesto. New York: Norton, 1988, p. 1.

of civil society...Family and civil society are actual components of the state, actual spiritual existences of the will; they are modes of existence of the state.”<sup>8</sup> Marx and Engels expanded on this notion when they wrote in The German Ideology of 1845-46, “The form of intercourse determined by the existing productive forces at all previous historical stages, and in its turn determining these, *is* civil society.”<sup>9</sup> They go on to state that civil society encompasses the entire enterprise of individuals within a given historical age. This would include industry, foreign relations, nationality, and certainly ideology and intellectual production.<sup>10</sup> Interestingly in their Manifesto, they begin by immediately assigning civil society a characteristic by stating, “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.”<sup>11</sup> This characteristic of civil society is a grim one: oppressor versus oppressed. This is a sentiment that certainly would have resonated with Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad. Marx and Engels write that there are two dominant actors in society, the bourgeois and the proletariat, and that society is comprised of and separated into these two classes. They write:

In the earlier epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank...

The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones.

Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeois, possesses, however, this distinctive feature: it has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeois and Proletariat.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Marx, Karl *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* from Tucker, Robert C. ed. The Marx-Engels Reader. New York: Norton, 1978 p. 17.

<sup>9</sup> Marx, Karl *The German Ideology* from Tucker, Robert C. ed. The Marx-Engels Reader. New York: Norton, 1978 p. 163.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>11</sup> Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich *The Communist Manifesto* from Taylor, A.J.P., ed. Marx and Engels: The Communist Manifesto. New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1967, p. 79.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

Clearly Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad would have identified themselves and the Ummah as the proletariat, while Nasser and the Shah would have constituted the bourgeois.

## 2. Ideology

Marx and Engels write in the Manifesto of the direction in which the bourgeois is taking man. It is not a direction they believe is enviable. They state, “In place of the old local national and seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property...It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e. to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image.”<sup>13</sup> Here, Marx and Engels convey something that is of great importance to the ideational challenge(s) facing Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad, and is something that will be returned to in the discussion of Foucault. What they are conveying is a sense of loss. In the individual’s encounter with the greater ‘other’, the uniqueness of that individual becomes sub-ducted by the larger other, and the result is a mono-type end with no diversity. This is precisely one of the aspects of the first ideational challenge that Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad would need to deal with. As Marx and Engels had shown that the uniqueness of the individual nation, in all its realms, was becoming engulfed by the larger nation, so Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad would need to show that Islam was in danger of becoming overtaken by its encounter with the West. And in the process Islam had in fact lost something: God.

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

Interestingly, the passage above cites a general realm of loss – from material to intellectual. But Marx and Engels perceptively write later on about the individual him/herself. It is as if they strategically understood that it may be too abstract for the individual proletarian to understand the subduction of individuality into the greater other. As a result, they write in a very personal manner about the worker and the pride in his/her work in the hope that this might reach those who did not already acquiesce. Marx and Engels state:

“Owing to the extensive use of machinery and to division of labor, the work of the proletarians has lost all individual character, and, consequently, all charm for the workman. He becomes an appendage of the machine, and it is only the most simple, most monotonous, and most easily required knack that is required of him. Hence, the cost of production of a workman is restricted, almost entirely, to the means of subsistence that he requires for his maintenance, and for the propagation of his race. But the price of a commodity, and therefore also of labor is equal to its cost of production. In proportion, therefore, as the repulsiveness of the work increases, the wage decreases.”<sup>14</sup>

This passage addresses the second ideational challenge that Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad would need to contend with: the ability to reach the individual Muslim within the greater Ummah. The way to reach the entire Ummah was by one individual Muslim at a time.

In doing so lay the third ideational challenge of Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad: the need to make their thought available to all Muslims. Marx and Engels hit upon an extremely important notion in this regard in The German Ideology. They state that, “For each new class which puts itself in the place of one ruling before it, is compelled, merely in order to carry through its aim, to represent its interest as the common interest of all the members of society, that is, expressed in ideal form: it has to give its ideas the form of

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

universality, and represent them as the only rational, universally valid ones.”<sup>15</sup> It would serve Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad no purpose to create a corpus of thought with elements so disparate that their thought would be lost on their target audience. Zealous action would then surely be more difficult to inspire en masse. What each thinker needed to do was develop as streamlined a body of thought as possible in order to reach as many as possible in a coherent manner. As Marx and Engels state in The German Ideology, “history is always under the sway of ideas.”<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps as the foci of the Manifesto, Marx and Engels enjoin the proletariat to join together in a union as a means of countering the bourgeois. They again seemed to perceptively recognize that there is little chance for the individual to resist sub-duction by the larger other if each individual does not band together in a group (which represents the uniqueness of each individual) or a union. The individual, according to Marx and Engels, is doomed from the outset when resisting a greater entity. However, an organization of individuals that retains, in a larger sense, the characteristic of the individuals it is comprised of, stands a much greater possibility of not falling prey to that larger entity. They write, “Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battle lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever-expanding union of the workers.”<sup>17</sup> This sentiment also held true for Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad, but more so in the ideological sense than in the physical one. In the creation of an indigenous Islamic ideology, they had to unite the Ummah around a central tenet: anti-Westernism.

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<sup>15</sup> Marx, Karl *The German Ideology* from Tucker, Robert C. ed. The Marx-Engels Reader. New York: Norton, 1978 p. 174.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174.

<sup>17</sup> Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich *The Communist Manifesto* from Taylor, A.J.P., ed. Marx and Engels: The Communist Manifesto. New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1967, p. 90.

To enact meaningful change in civil society, the Ummah would have to be reached ideologically.

### 3. Revolution

Marx and Engels believed that the proletariat had a special potential. This potential was the capacity for revolution as the means to achieve change within civil society.<sup>18</sup> As revealed in their writings, Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad were also heavily reliant upon this potential of the people - to act on the ideas set forth in these writings to bring about change. Marx and Engels wrote in The German Ideology, “revolution is the driving force of history.”<sup>19</sup> As the class with the potential for revolution, Marx and Engels presume that there are pre-existing ideas of a revolutionary nature within that class. And it is important for those ideas to surface, as the ruling class (the bourgeois) of a historical period posit the de facto dominant ideology of that historical period. As Marx and Engels note, the ruling class is “the ruling intellectual force...so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.”<sup>20</sup> It is clear that in order for the ruling class, and therefore the ruling ideology, to be changed Marx and Engels believe that a revolutionary, and therefore counter-ideology, must be posited. They believed that it was therefore incumbent upon the proletariat to engage in revolution. As they state in The German Ideology, “the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a revolution; this revolution is necessary,

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<sup>18</sup> Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich *Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League* from Tucker, Robert C. ed. The Marx-Engels Reader. New York: Norton, 1978 p. 501.

<sup>19</sup> Marx, Karl *The German Ideology* from Tucker, Robert C. ed. The Marx-Engels Reader. New York: Norton, 1978 p. 164.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 164.

therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of the ages and become fitted for to found society anew.”<sup>21</sup> [SIC] In fact, the Manifesto enjoins the proletariat to revolt against the bourgeois outright. Marx and Engels state that “the violent overthrow of the bourgeois lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat.”<sup>22</sup> Qutb especially was of the mind that action, particularly jihad, must necessarily be involved as part of this process of change. However, one of the most interesting parallels between Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad and Marx and Engels’ work is that though they do advocate physical action, the means by which they transmitted these stances is through the medium of writing. In other words, one had to be capable of comprehending the abstract philosophical reasoning behind taking action before action could actually be taken.

### C. The Interaction of Ideas: Michel Foucault

Part of the ideology that Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad had to posit in taking on this challenge was to first show the Ummah that they, as Muslims, had in fact lost something in Islam’s encounter with the West. Michel Foucault writes in Discipline and Punish that punishment “assumed as its principal object the loss of wealth or rights.”<sup>23</sup> While wealth can be classified as a materialistic (and even a tangible) thing, the same cannot necessarily be said of an abstract concept such as rights. And here Foucault hits upon something that is very important. To remove something so basic as a right is to

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.

<sup>22</sup> Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich *The Communist Manifesto* from Taylor, A.J.P., ed. Marx and Engels: The Communist Manifesto. New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1967, p. 93.

<sup>23</sup> Foucault, Michel. Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison. London: Penguin Books, 1975 p. 15.

truly punish someone. Yet the real point behind the removal of rights is the removal of the abstract, the removal of the philosophic capacity to envision. When something that is so fundamental to one's life as a right is taken away, that ability to envision is also taken away. As an abstract concept, faith and the ability to believe is also something that has the potential to be removed by punishment. What Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad would need to prove to other Muslims is that the West was in fact punishing Islam through values such as secularism, materialism, and imperialism. As a result of this punishment, another intangible entity was being taken away from Muslims at the hands of the West: God.

As the center of Islamic life, if God were to be overstepped, Islam would be a moot way of living. Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad needed the Ummah to respond to this situation in a way that showed the Ummah would not tolerate such a course. As Foucault writes, "the power to judge should no longer depend on the innumerable, discontinuous, sometimes contradictory privileges of sovereignty, but on the continuously distributed effects of public power."<sup>24</sup> In other words, if change was to be enacted, as Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad certainly and passionately thought it should, that change was going to have to come from the Muslim people, and not those in governmental power. In the case of both Nasser in Egypt and the Shah in Iran, it was these figures in the government (and who essentially were the government) that were largely responsible in the eyes of Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad for allowing the encounter with the West to even take place. To try to initiate change beginning with the government would be a failure from the outset. Hence, change would have to come from within the ranks of the Ummah.

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

In constructing an indigenous Islamic ideology against the West, this was a major part of the challenge that Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad faced. Speaking to those *within* Islamic society who were perhaps Muslim, but in name only, was extremely important. It was they who were ultimately the ones who these thinkers felt were the weakest of the Ummah. It was they who had become lapsed from an Islamic perspective, and certainly from Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad's perspective. In the relationship between Islam and the West, these thinkers felt that the West had the upper hand, but only because the individual Muslim had let it do so. Of these people, Foucault writes of a sentiment that they would have agreed with: "Indeed, he is worse than an enemy, for it is from within society that he delivers his blows – he is nothing less than a traitor, a 'monster.'"<sup>25</sup>

The ultimate value that Foucault contributes to the case of Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad lies in the ending segment of *Generalized Punishment* from Discipline and Punish. Foucault writes:

"Beneath the humanization of the penalties, what one finds are all those rules that authorize, or rather demand, 'leniency', as a calculated economy of the power to punish. But they also provoke a shift in the point of application of this power: it is no longer the body, with the ritual play of excessive pains, spectacular brandings in the ritual of the public execution; it is the mind, or rather a play of representations and signs circulating discretely but necessarily and evidently in the minds of all. It is no longer the body, but the soul, said Mably. And we see very clearly what he meant by this term: the correlative of a technique of power."<sup>26</sup>

In other words, for Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad it was going to be paramount to reach the Ummah on an intellectual level, rather than on a physical one. To transmit their ideology, their minds would have to connect with the minds of individual Muslims. That is not to say that they would not advocate physical resistance to the West, but they would need to provide the philosophical basis for doing so first. This Foucault refers to as

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

“tactics of power.”<sup>27</sup> In many ways, Foucault is right to use the term tactics here. In order to transmit an ideology, hap-hazardness does not work. Rather, the message must be carefully constructed, calculated, and applicable to an audience that is able and willing to listen. Tactical maneuvering in this manner increases the likelihood that the ideology created will be noticed if not heeded.

In describing the types of objectification of penal reform, Foucault makes some interesting remarks about the interaction of ideas. He writes that there are more immediate effects in the reform of punishment. This reorganization:

“made use of the discourse already constituted by the Ideologues. This discourse provided, in effect, by means of the theory of interests, representation and signs, by the series and genesis that it reconstituted, a sort of general recipe for the exercise of power over men: the ‘mind’ as a surface of inscription for power, with semiology as its tool; the submission of bodies through the control of ideas...”<sup>28</sup>

The ‘mind as a surface of inscription for power’ is an immensely important phrase. It essentially means that ideology is the most vital form of power. It also implies that thought is a more persuasive force than action. Through the persuasiveness of ideas, submission is achieved. In this framework, the degree of persuasiveness an idea holds becomes extremely significant. The more persuasive the idea, the more complete the submission. That is why it was essential for Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad to construct their ideology in a way that Muslims at large could understand, and therefore have it hold great appeal. In doing so, these thinkers sought to enact change from within the Ummah and in doing so give that change a strength and popularity that the government(s) would be forced to pay attention to. Furthering this sentiments, Foucault goes on to say:

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

“Let us hear once more what Servan has to say: the ideas of crime and punishment must be strongly linked and ‘follow one another without interruption...When you have thus formed the chain of ideas in the heads of your citizens, you will then be able to pride yourselves on guiding them and being their masters. A stupid despot may constrain his slaves with iron chains; but a true politician binds them even more strongly by the chain of their own ideas; it is at the stable point of reason that he secures the end of the chain; this link is all the stronger in that we do not know of what it is made and we believe it to be our own work; despair and time eat away at the bonds of iron and steel, but they are powerless against the habitual union of ideas, they can only tighten it still more; and on the soft fibers of the brain is founded the unshakable base of the soundest of Empires.’”<sup>29</sup>

In these lines, Foucault has made an argument for the strength of ideology. The ‘union of ideas’ is much more important a bond than any material substance in that an idea appeals to ones abstract sense. One can put forth an ideology that verbalizes a series of tangible realities, and in doing so transforms them into entities that explain a reality in a manner that makes sense to an individual. In many ways, this was the challenge that faced Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad: they needed to depict the situation they believed Islam was facing at the hands of the West, and inscribe that situation on the minds of their fellow Muslims in order to begin enacting an indigenous movement for change.

Foucault rightly points out that the development of an ideology is not a sudden occurrence. In that regard, he writes, “it is rather a multiplicity of often minor processes, of different origin and scattered location, which overlap, repeat, or imitate one another, support one another, distinguish themselves from one another according to their domain of application, converge, and gradually produce the blueprint of a general method.”<sup>30</sup> This certainly was the case with Jamal al-din al-Afghani, the Iranian thinker who set down the initial roots of modern Islamism. All of these elements are the circumstances of an encounter with something. Personal situations, political situations, religious situations, and cultural situations all combine to produce the experiences of a figure’s life

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

that then influence how that person perceives what is going on around him. Those experiences often lead to the creation of an ideology espousing a certain tone. In the case of Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad, though they had different experiences and circumstance in which they encountered the West, their tone(s) were all similar; they were radically anti-Western.

#### D. The Interaction of Ideas: Antonio Gramsci

Antonio Gramsci is also an important figure in the realm of how ideas interact. In developing his own political thought and theory, Gramsci drew heavily upon Marx and Croce. Gramsci relates that there are several Marxian precautions that are included in his own political theory foundation. He identifies the term ‘structure’ as one of importance in politics. By structure, Gramsci most likely means the building up of power for a generally larger entity such as the state. In relation to politics, Gramsci writes, “politics in fact is at any given time the reflection of the tendencies of development in the structure...”<sup>31</sup> He goes on to say that “many political acts are due to internal necessities of an organizational character, that is they are tied to the need to give coherence to a party, a group, a society.”<sup>32</sup> Certainly, this would have made sense to Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad, because what they as representatives of Islam were trying to establish was a coherent outlook in which the West was the problem. To create such an outlook and mobilize the Ummah in what they saw as the right direction, they thought this was indeed a ‘necessity.’

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<sup>31</sup> Gramsci, Antonio. *Structure and Superstructure* from Forgacs, David ed. The Gramsci Reader. New York: NYU Press, 2000 p. 191.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

Gramsci builds upon these notions, and mentions his indebtedness both to Lenin and Croce, when he writes “the realization of a hegemonic apparatus, in so far as it creates a new ideological terrain, determines a reform of consciousness and of methods of knowledge: it is a fact of knowledge, a philosophical fact. In Croceian terms: when one succeeds in introducing a new morality in conformity with a new conception of the world, one finishes by introducing the conception as well; in other words, one determines a reform of the whole of philosophy.”<sup>33</sup> This is, in hindsight, what Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad needed to accomplish. They needed to establish a new ideology in order to reform the consciousness of the Ummah, both local and global. They also needed to reassert the prevalence of Islam in the ever increasing world of jahiliyyah – the West. If ever there was a time to do so, in the eyes of Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad, it was the present moment.

The structures and superstructures that Gramsci wrote of combined to form what he terms a “historical bloc.” He writes, “That is to say the complex, contradictory and discordant ensemble of the superstructures is the reflection of the ensemble of the social relations of production.”<sup>34</sup> Gramsci uses this concept to highlight the unity of theory and practice, and intellectuals and the masses, among other things. He does this in order to restore the study of actual historical situations.<sup>35</sup> Certainly in terms of Qutb’s thought, this notion of the restoration of real historical circumstances is significant. Qutb in seeking a paradigmatic historical situation upon which he wished the current Ummah to return, turned to the time of Muhammad and the Rashidun. As the way in which he felt society and Islam were in its perfect form, Qutb needed to convince the Ummah that this

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<sup>33</sup> Gramsci, Antonio. *Structure and Superstructure ii*. From *Ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>34</sup> Gramsci, Antonio. *Structure and Superstructure iii*. From *Ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>35</sup> Forgacs, David ed. The Gramsci Reader. New York: NYU Press, 2000 p. 424.

was also the case. Perhaps more importantly, this historical situation was free of outside influences, namely those of the West. In this sense, Islam was in its most pure form and was to be emulated in the contemporary situation.

As opposed to Foucault's word 'submission' when describing the acceptance of an ideology, Antonio Gramsci would use the term 'hegemony.' For Gramsci, the concept of hegemony is one of a relationship of consent through both political and ideological leadership.<sup>36</sup> Cultural leadership also plays a part in Gramsci's definition of hegemony. Despite its Leninist origins, where hegemony was considered a strategy for revolution by the working class to win the majority support, Gramsci developed the term so that it became the practice of the capitalist class in the achieving and maintaining of state power. It is what Roger Simon calls, "a relation between classes and other social forces."<sup>37</sup> In this achieving and maintaining of power, the term power is most properly understood in the Gramscian sense as relational. Power must be "diffused throughout civil society as well as being embodied in the coercive apparatuses of the state."<sup>38</sup> This is similar to Foucault's thought in that it is the citizen that should be the target of an ideology from which to enact change. Perhaps not to the degree that Foucault emphasizes the fact, but the notion that change must come from within society rather than from the government is still present.

Ideology for Gramsci is not an abstract or esoteric concept, but rather has a material existence in political activities.<sup>39</sup> As such, ideology for Gramsci "provides

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<sup>36</sup> Simon, Roger. Gramsci's Political Thought: An Introduction. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1982 p. 22.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

people with rules of practical conduct and moral behavior.”<sup>40</sup> Gramsci writes, “To the extent that ideologies are historically necessary they have a validity which is ‘psychological’; they ‘organize’ human masses, they form the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc.”<sup>41</sup> Political parties and other such social organizations are the responsible agents for the spreading and sustaining of ideologies. The success of an ideology is dependant upon how well it holds other diverse social elements together. In this regard, both Gramsci and Foucault compliment one another.

For Gramsci, then, ideology acts as an adhesive element in social unification. Yet it also does more than that. Political ideologies are an important part of the ideological spectrum in that for Gramsci they are a crucial element “in order to make the governed intellectually independent of the governing, in order to destroy one hegemony and create another, as a necessary moment in the revolutionizing of praxis.”<sup>42</sup> Here it is necessary to define the Gramscian term ‘philosophy of praxis.’ By this he means a specific interpretation of Marxism where theory and practice unite. The philosophy of praxis for Gramsci is “a superstructure, it is the terrain on which determinate social groups become conscious of their own social being, their own strength their own tasks, their own becoming.”<sup>43</sup> Thus, as Simon says, “The philosophy of praxis is the ‘self-consciousness’ of historical ‘necessity.’ It involves the formation of a revolutionary collective will which can act in accordance with that necessity. Gramsci in other words sees the philosophy of

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>41</sup> Gramsci, Antonio. *Ideologies*. From Forgacs, David ed. *The Gramsci Reader*. New York: NYU Press, 2000 p. 199.

<sup>42</sup> Gramsci, Antonio. *Political Ideologies*. From *Ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

praxis not only as a system of philosophical ideas, but also as forming the basis of a ‘mass conception of the world.’”<sup>44</sup>

Simon points out something very interesting when speaking of trying to build a bloc of social forces; he writes that for Gramsci, “a collective will can only be forged by a process of intellectual and moral reform that will create a common conception of the world.”<sup>45</sup> An ideological struggle is “a process of transformation in which some of the elements are rearranged and combined in a different way with a new nucleus or central principle. A process of this kind is necessary because if the old ideological system was a genuinely popular one, then the elements (or at least some of them) to which this popularity was due, need to be preserved in the new system even if their relative weight and some of their content is changed. The unity of the new ideological system will stem from its nucleus or central unifying principle.”<sup>46</sup> This new ideological system for Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad centered on an anti-Western nucleus.

#### E. The Interaction of Ideas – Friedrich Nietzsche: The Loss of God

The theoretical nature of this research will utilize the following framework among others, including the preceding. In his writings, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) postulated the idea that when an entity encounters the West, something is lost in that encounter. Because of the perceived materialistic, etc nature of the West, Nietzsche believed the something that is lost is God. But he defined God in a very specific fashion – God as the nucleus of moral life. This notion is something that resonated very deeply

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<sup>44</sup> Forgacs, David ed. The Gramsci Reader. New York: NYU Press, 2000 p. 429.

<sup>45</sup> Simon, Roger. Gramsci's Political Thought: An Introduction. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1982 p. 61.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p.62.

with Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad. They believed that the West was indeed materialistic, and because materialism, capitalism, colonialism, and other similar forces had guided the development of the West, these forces had driven the West off its moral course. Hence the moral economy of which Charles Tripp wrote, but this time of the West, was shattered and in dire need of replacement. The way to solve this problem was very simple in their eyes. Islam was the answer. An instituting of the Quran as the legal and political framework of the West would also immediately restore God as the moral center of the West. Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad believed that to follow what is contained in the Quran is to put God at the center of one's life. To institute the Quran as a political and legal framework would place God at the center of society. In doing so, they sought to further the development of Islamic political thought in relation to the West.

Nietzsche wrote The Birth of Tragedy in 1872 and this is the earliest work in which he planted the seeds of the idea that would later constitute the loss of God in the West. Again, this nascent idea is something that did not develop in a vacuum; it took roughly ten years to develop, culminating with The Gay Science in 1882. However, in The Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche begins to initiate this idea when he postulates that individuality is the source of evil. He writes, "In these ideas, we already have all the component parts of a profound and pessimistic view of the world, at the same time the mystery doctrine of tragedy: the basic understanding of the unity of all things, individuation seen as the primal source of evil, art as the joyful hope that the spell of individuation can be broken, as a presentiment of a restored oneness."<sup>47</sup> The idea of the concept of oneness is something that Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad certainly would

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<sup>47</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. The Birth of Tragedy. New York: Penguin Books, 1993 p. 52.

have understood in a religious context; the Arabic word for the oneness of God is Tawheed. Additionally, this oneness of God was to transcend all areas of Islamic life, including politics. To disrupt this flow of God into life, in all its aspects, would have amounted to a supreme rejection or loss of God in society and in peoples lives. This rejection or loss, according to Nietzsche, stems from individuation or individuality. One can extrapolate Nietzsche's meaning to indicate that materialism, capitalism, etc fosters such individuality in a society. By following such concepts, inhabitants of a society have the potential to exhibit greed as a result of adhering to a materialistic nature. In the process, the idea of the good of the self takes precedence over the idea of the good of the whole. As a result, individuality is emphasized and prized. However, as Nietzsche indicates, and certainly what Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad would have agreed with, is that this is where the downfall of humanity and society begins. In other words, this is where the sense of loss begins.

Nietzsche goes on to write that a society that focuses on individualism and by proxy materialism etc, "believes in the rectification of the world through knowledge and in a life guided by science, and it can also truly confine the individual within a limited circle of soluble problems."<sup>48</sup> Clearly here Nietzsche believes that there is a schism between the scientific and the spiritual, and in the adoption of a scientific outlook, mankind is accessing a limited portion of potential knowledge – that which can be accessed or solved empirically. Nietzsche choice of wording here, particularly 'confined' is of great importance, as he postulates that there is no room, in a very real sense, for abstract thought that may not be able to rely on empirical data. In essence, humanity is cutting itself short by this non-utilization of abstract reasoning. He expresses this

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

sentiment when he states, “Fundamentally the chasm has not been bridged.”<sup>49</sup> Nietzsche also concludes that, “the contradiction at the heart of the world was revealed to him as a confusion of different worlds, a divine and a human world, for example, both individually in the right, but each merely one individual beside the other, suffering from its individuation. In the individual’s heroic effort to achieve universality, in the attempt to escape the spell of individuation, to become the only being in the world, he encounters the hidden primal contradiction – he commits sacrilege, that is, and he suffers.”<sup>50</sup> In doing so, one can begin to see the groundwork being laid for the next logical step in Nietzsche’s mind and argument: that a society which focuses on the material experiences a loss of the spiritual, i.e. God. This causes him to proclaim, “Wherever we look we can observe the transformations wrought by this event...At the moment of supreme joy we hear the scream of horror or the yearning lamentation for something irrevocably lost.”<sup>51</sup>

In his Unfashionable Observations of 1876, Nietzsche continued to develop the ideas begun in The Birth of Tragedy. Here Nietzsche describes unequivocally how his idea of individuality equates to a lack and therefore loss of God. He begins by making the somewhat enigmatic statement “There is a degree of sleeplessness, of rumination, of historical sensibility, that injures and ultimately destroys all living things, whether a human being, a people, or a culture.”<sup>52</sup> However, he goes on to note “exactly how great the shaping power of a human being, a people, a culture is; by shaping power I mean that

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*.. p. 20.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*.. p. 50.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*.. p. 20.

<sup>52</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. Unfashionable Observations Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995 p. 89.

power to develop its own singular character out of itself, to shape and assimilate what is past and alien, to heal wounds, to replace what has been lost.”<sup>53</sup>

Nietzsche reaches the apex of his argument when he states, “For example, a religious thought... What is noblest and loftiest has no effect at all on the masses.”<sup>54</sup> In what is Nietzsche’s clearest language thus far, he relates how religion, and therefore God, have been supplanted by other forces in the minds of greater society. As a result, God has been lost. But not only for this society, but also for those who encounter it and are mesmerized by it, to the degree that they too lose God when they encounter that society. Of this, Nietzsche goes on to state that, “It’s certainly the hour of great danger: human beings seem to be close to discovering that the egoism of individuals, of groups, or of the masses was in all ages the lever behind historical movements, but at the same time, they are by no means troubled by this discovery; instead, they decree: ‘Egoism shall be our God.’ Armed with this new belief, they set with unmistakable intent about the task of erecting future history upon egoism.”<sup>55</sup> Hence for Nietzsche, it is abundantly clear that he recognizes individuality, or what he calls egoism, as the loss of God.

Perhaps an unanticipated element in this line of Nietzschean thought is something that Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad used in their own justifications for the advancement of Islamic political thought in relation to the West. They sought a return to what they saw as the ‘Golden Age’ of Islam, the time of Muhammad and the Rashidun. Whether in fact this was the ideal time of Muslim history is a matter of great debate, but the point here is that these thinkers, in their own minds, believed that it was. And as such, they were prepared to institute that belief into the development of their own justification for

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* p. 89.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* p. 155.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* p. 155.

their ideology. Nietzsche writes that, “Of what utility to the contemporary human being, then, is the monumental view of the past, the occupation with the classical and rare accomplishments of earlier times? From it he concludes that the greatness that once existed was at least possible at one time, and that it therefore will probably be possible once again.”<sup>56</sup> Nietzsche goes on to state, “since it disregards all causes, one would with little exaggeration be able to call monumental history a collection of ‘effects in themselves,’ of events that will have an effect on every age.”<sup>57</sup> By seeking a return to what Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad perceived as an ideal time, they believed that the current generations of the world, and certainly of the West, might follow its example.

The thoughts that Nietzsche developed in both The Birth of Tragedy and Unfashionable Observations reached their apex in his work The Gay Science in 1882. In Section 125, entitled *The Madman*, Nietzsche relates the anecdote of a certain madman who in the early morning hours appears at a marketplace and begins a monologue about God. Though he cries out that he is seeking God, he is chided and repudiated by his audience. At this point, Nietzsche writes, “The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. ‘Wither is God?’ he cried; ‘I will tell you. We have killed him – you and I. All of us are his murderers...Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the grave diggers who are burying God?...God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.’”<sup>58</sup>

In his commentary on Nietzsche, Jorn K. Bramann notes that Nietzsche believed that the mental or spiritual could not ultimately be separated from physical matter, thereby rejecting “the metaphysical thinking that had dominated most of traditional

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* p. 98.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* p. 99.

<sup>58</sup> Nietzsche Friedrich. The Gay Science New York: Vintage Books, 1974 p. 181.

philosophy” until Nietzsche’s time.<sup>59</sup> Nietzsche believed that since the time of Plato and Socrates, the West had been on a “road of degeneracy as a result of this misguided devaluation of matter and its corresponding over-valuation of a supernatural spirit or mind. For Nietzsche, this wrongheaded valuation of things amounts to nothing less than a wholesale betrayal of the earth – with all the consequences that such a betrayal of the natural cosmos implies.”<sup>60</sup> The de-valuation of the physical world by men is, for Nietzsche, because of mankind’s fear of life, its “innumerable uncertainties, sufferings, and its inescapable finality,” and because of this fear, “people seek refuge in an ideal and imaginary world where they seem to find everlasting peace and relief from all the ailments that besiege them on earth.”<sup>61</sup> Yet, despite this line of thought, Bramann recognizes that Nietzsche was not unaware of the importance that these metaphysical notions had upon the molding of humanity.

In reference to this thought is the core of *The Madman*: “God is dead.” Bramann correctly asserts that in this phrase, Nietzsche did not mean to make a literal statement concerning either the existence or non-existence of God. Instead Nietzsche provides us with “an observation concerning the idea of the deity, and the idea’s crucial role as a foundation of culture...In a universe conceived in strictly scientific terms, God has no intelligible place anymore, no meaningful role in the explanation of the workings of the world. In a culture that depends so much on sober scientific research and thinking as ours, the traditional talk about God has become vacuous and pointless.”<sup>62</sup> Whereas Nietzsche identifies mankind’s uncertainties as the reason for the West’s loss of God,

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<sup>59</sup> Bramann, Jorn K. Nietzsche: The Darkness of Life. Frostburg University Philosophical Forum, n.d. p. 4. <http://faculty.frostburg.edu/phil/forum/Nietzsche.htm>

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad would replace those with such terms as materialism and colonialism, etc. Essentially and crucially, however, the thinking is the same here between Nietzsche and Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad: the conflict between the actual and the probable, the tangible and perceived. Both science (Nietzsche) and materialism, etc (Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad) provide a concrete reality by which standards can be judged, and therefore, in the eyes of Nietzsche and Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad, upon which the West has based itself and consequently lost God. Religion, however, relies upon the intangible: faith. In this regard, Bramann is correct with both the instance of Nietzsche and Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad when he states, “It is the prevalence of this secular cultural situation that prompted Nietzsche to propose that ‘God is dead.’”<sup>63</sup>

Interestingly, in his commentary Bramann contends that Nietzsche’s madman is not actually mad in the psychological sense, but seems so because he possesses information that the market-goers have not realized. Bramann writes, “What is news to them is that it is they who have killed God, that it was their own doing (by developing a modern civilization of scientific thought and sophisticated technology) that has lead them to the demise of the Supreme Being in their world. And what the crowd fails to realize is the enormity of the consequences that are bound to follow from their deed.”<sup>64</sup> This is an assessment that Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad would whole-heartedly agree with. Hence when Bramann states, “Unnoticed by the crowd, the world as a whole has become a dark, cold, and frighteningly disorienting place” we can see the direct parallels between Nietzsche’s thought and that of Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad.<sup>65</sup> Nietzsche’s crowd indicates for Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad both the West and the global Ummah who

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

have both participated in and watched “the earth unchained from its sun.”<sup>66</sup> The sun, in this parable, represents God, and the earth unchaining itself from the sun represents “humanity’s loss of a center – of a God and divine order that that could give orientation and meaning to human lives and endeavors.”<sup>67</sup>

As Nietzsche writes that humanity is “plunging continually” into this abyss and that “God remains dead,” he echoes the thoughts of Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad. It is interesting to note that Bramann believes that this condition of modernity has the potential to cause people to return to visions of the past, when God was the center of human life. This is exactly what these thinkers advocate: a return to the time of Muhammad and the Rashidun. This is the perceived Golden Age of Islam, when Muhammad and his first four successors were the model par excellence for right living under God. Morals and standards were passed on from those who knew Muhammad, and presumably knew Muhammad’s directive of how these should be interpreted and implemented as directed from God in the Quran. In contrast to this Golden Age is the time in which Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad lived, and the time that Nietzsche is describing, though obviously pre-dating them. It shows perhaps astounding foresight on Nietzsche’s part when he includes a section at the end of the parable where the madman relates that he has warned humanity too early, and that they are not willing to listen to him. Nietzsche writes, “Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners; and they, too, were silent and stared at him in astonishment. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, and it broke into pieces and went out. ‘I have come too early,’ he said then; ‘my time is not yet...it has not yet reached the ears of men...deeds, though done, still

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<sup>66</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. The Gay Science New York: Vintage Books, 1974 p. 181.

<sup>67</sup> Bramann, Jorn K. Nietzsche: The Darkness of Life. Frostburg University Philosophical Forum, n.d. p. 7.

require time to be seen and heard.”<sup>68</sup> For Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad, it is clear that they felt the time to let humanity know of its infraction was during their lifetimes.

Whereas the madman described the time as being too early, they felt it was ripe, perhaps even overdue. As Bramann astutely notes, “One particularly prominent aspect of the general loss of orientation and meaning invoked by the madman is the felt absence of absolute standards and values. If there is no list of moral principles or rules like the Ten Commandments, and if there is no divine authority to back them up, all people are left with are a number of competing moralities – and no impartial criteria by which they could tell which of these competing systems might be valid or best.”<sup>69</sup>

Bramann makes a keen observation when he states, “Science, in other words, did not only fail to establish a new value system, but vigorously reinforced the moral disorientation of modernity by emphasizing its principled incompetence with regard to matters of ethics.”<sup>70</sup> Again, this is a notion that Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad would have agreed with, but also would have taken it one step further to agree with Nietzsche. Behind these driving forces of science, modernity, materialism, etc are the people that created, espoused, and believed such forces. Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad would acquiesce to the fact that it is these people who are responsible for the death of God as the moral compass of humanity, and as Nietzsche concludes in his parable of the Madman, “they have done it themselves.”<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. The Gay Science New York: Vintage Books, 1974 p. 182.

<sup>69</sup> Bramann, Jorn K. Nietzsche: The Darkness of Life. Frostburg University Philosophical Forum, n.d. p. 7.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>71</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. The Gay Science New York: Vintage Books, 1974 p. 182.

#### F. Charles Tripp's *Islam and the Moral Economy*

In Islam and the Moral Economy, Charles Tripp has made headway into the intricate and delicate relationship between Islam and the West. While his framework is “The Challenge of Capitalism,” this has ramifications and application in dealing with this research on the West.

The title for Tripp's work is an apt and interesting one. In a clear and succinct phrase, Tripp has highlighted the various important facets of morals and ethics of a larger entity such as a society, or in this case, a religion. The moral economy, hence, is a way of encompassing the non-material aspects and values of Muslim society. Yet it also has the potential to be threatened by outside, material forces. And this is where the ‘challenge’ lies for many Muslims: to maintain a set of principles by which to live, without letting those principles be compromised or overtaken by exterior forces. As Tripp states,

“For many Muslim intellectuals the key question has been whether symbolic exchange and material exchange are in harmony, and whether appropriate mechanisms can be found to translate like into unlike and vice versa. This has often focused on debates about money, including characteristic fears and prohibitions. Both in the Islamic world and elsewhere, the fear is that money detached from the objects which give it value, has a free-floating, amoral power, representing a serious threat to the social order and the ethical community. It is thus not surprising that in Islamic thought, as in a number of other great ethical traditions, restrictions have been devised to control monetary exchange, attempting to keep it tied to actually existing objects.”<sup>72</sup>

Tripp believes that the market, as the foremost location for the trade and exchange of goods, is the prime metaphor for social operations and transactions. He goes on to state, “Money and the search for profit become the measures of all things, completing the disembodied cash transactions in which ethical constraints are no longer considered part of the process, except prudentially. This model of rationality colonizes the ethical world,

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<sup>72</sup> Tripp, Charles. *Islam and the Moral Economy: The Challenge of Capitalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 5.

suggesting that it is the model for a universal rationality, its triumph evident in the ethically sanctioned freeing of ‘human nature’ to become the agent that will reproduce the capitalist enterprise.”<sup>73</sup> As the US is arguably the most important example of a Western capitalist economy, given this line of thinking it is easy to see why Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad saw Islam being cast aside in favor of materialism at the hands of the US due to the involvement of the US with various Middle Eastern countries. This “model for rationality” was the greatest fear (on earth) of these figures. Tripp’s observation that “It is not simply that the morally offensive aspects of capitalism provoke, but also that its transformative potential attracts” holds incredible importance when speaking of Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad and their thoughts on the West. Some such as these figures see this transformation as an “existential threat.”<sup>74</sup> But other historical figures, the enablers of this encounter with the West such as Nasser, and the Shah, see this as an opportunity to stay in power, secure revenue, and put their own stamp on the direction of Muslim history and Islamic society. As the ones in positions of governmental power, these enablers are the ones who were thought to have the most potential to enact change in Islamic society. History would prove, however, that this was not necessarily the case.

Tripp also points out something that is vital to understanding any Muslim thinker that has developed a radical tone in their thinking. Numerous responses to Islam’s problem(s) with the West and Westernization have been produced from within the Islamic philosophical ranks during the mid-twentieth century. These various responses indicate the nature and type of engagements with the West. Though they draw upon

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

comparable sources, “how they combine and interpret them will depend on their circumstances.”<sup>75</sup> Again, Tripp enforces the previously postulated notion that the encounter with the West is the same for all of the thinkers presented in this research (Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad), while it is the circumstances of each encounter that change, and which give unique shape to each figures response to the West. Tripp poses a central question that is appropriate to Muslim thinkers encountering “The West,” and that is: how does a Muslim lead a good and balanced Islamic life in a world that is increasingly dominated by “capitalist modernity”?<sup>76</sup> In answering this question Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad, though responding from many circumstances, locations, and dates unify in their responses around the belief that the West poses a distinct set of problems, a set of problems that can only be answered by the historical and religious traditions of Islam.<sup>77</sup> These answers will then further the development of the corpus of Islamic political thought.

In a chapter entitled “*Repertoires of Resistance*” Tripp takes a comparative look at Qutb and Shariati and their responses to the issue of Islam and capitalism. Again, the value in this comparison, though specifically dealing with capitalism, can be extrapolated on to the larger issue of the West, of which capitalism is a prominent aspect. Qutb and Shariati, according to Tripp, exemplify the concern Muslim intellectuals have with postulating a series of uniquely Islamic morals in order to have society reflect, reproduce, and assimilate them into everyday life.<sup>78</sup> Such thinkers who return to an idealized historical past as the solution for the current ills of Muslim society reflected the inevitable

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

juxtaposition of the material and the symbolic: capital represented the material and the idealized past represented the symbolic. Through this idealized approach, it was hoped that the symbolic would serve as a “distinct sphere of effect.”<sup>79</sup> In addition to fending off the materialistic forces of the West, this idealism was meant to insulate the global Muslim community from any further influences that might be exerted by the West.<sup>80</sup> In doing so, Qutb and Shariati imbue their ideology with a historical stamp in order to function in a world that they believe was thrust upon them. As Tripp states, “For both of them, this would be the beginning of an imaginative recasting of the world, an opportunity to establish a community of Islamic belief that would serve as the model and the inspiration for a new generation educated in the values of a system that would negate the apparently overwhelming power of materialism.”<sup>81</sup> In addition, this recasting would strengthen the notion that the global Muslim community was now a unilateral actor, responsible for its own historical course and not dependant upon “The West” for guidance or direction. Tripp rightly states that when Qutb and Shariati espouse a return to the Islamic historical precedent of the Seventh Century AD, they also give their own viewpoints a certain theological credibility in that they claim to be representing and understand the original purpose and message of Muhammad. From this perspective, they sought to make their ideology uniquely difficult to combat, as well as positioning themselves as the de facto interpreters of the Quran for both past and future Islamic (political) history.

Both Qutb and Shariati sought to make this ‘recasting of the world’ an ideological one. They were trying desperately to have the global Muslim community internalize the

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

Quran so that its canons would become normative for all Muslims in a way that intensely reflected their zeal for the religion, not just a casual obedience. Tripp writes that Qutb and Shariati were “trying to recapture the spirit of the early Muslim community whose members had undergone the dramatic experience of personal conversion...it was this fierce and transfiguring faith that had given Islamic principles such power under the early Caliphs.”<sup>82</sup> The obvious flaw in their reasoning is that the actual historical event that Qutb and Shariati want to return to is being viewed by them through countless layers of historical glass, so that what they think they see may not be historically accurate. The question is, however, does that matter? And here the discussion turns to faith. Christians need only to turn to Pauline literature in the New Testament to experience the same sentiment that Qutb and Shariati were trying to generate – the personal experience of conversion. Paul is unique in the Bible in that in his letters, he openly states that he had not met Jesus, unlike the disciples whose names are attributed to the canonized Gospels. Personal faith and conversion is very powerful, especially when coupled to a historical event and used as a tool to wrench people away from a materialistic world. Qutb and Shariati, as transparent as some elements of their ideology may be, were wise to recognize this idea and propagate it. The implication of their ideology is that God is on their side, not that of “The West.” Their question to Muslims worldwide is: whose side do you want to be on?

Qutb and Shariati were afraid that with the involvement of the US in Middle Eastern nations affairs, or perhaps more importantly greater Islamic affairs, the Word of God as set forth for Muslims in the Quran would give way to rules, laws, and regulations made by man. In doing so, this would offend God and alienate man from God. Tripp

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

uses the term “imagination” heavily throughout this chapter in the sense that he appears to regard man-made laws as tangible entities. In dealing with the idealist thought of Qutb and Shariati, an element of the abstract is needed. Because of the nature of the ideology Qutb and Shariati were espousing, Tripp writes “If the main task was to introduce Muslims to approach the Quran in a direct and unmediated way, enabling them to appreciate its beauty and power, the first target of reconstruction must be the individual imagination.”<sup>83</sup> This sentiment is very much in agreement with Marx, Engels, Foucault, Gramsci, and Nietzsche. In other words, people must be amenable and open to the prospect of personal conversion. In and through that conversion, Muslims would then be able to enact the change within Islamic civil society and the Islamic moral economy that Qutb, Shariati, and in this research, Al-e Ahmad thought was so vital to fight the seductive forces of the West.

#### G. Orientalist Discourse

Part of this research argues that the perspectives of Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad are unique among Islamic thinkers in the mid-twentieth century. This is due to the fact they were critiquing the West based upon their experiences while in the West, and using Western intellectual ideas to do so. This research argues that their unique perspective was a reaction to aspects of orientalism, particularly as later articulated by Edward Said.

Throughout his 1978 work Orientalism, Said offers many varying definitions of what he feels orientalism actually is. However, the area that this research is concerned with is orientalism as a way of thinking, an approach to ideas, or simply put, method. In

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

terms of method, Said defines orientalism as “a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident.’”<sup>84</sup> As part of this distinction, Said uses Flaubert’s encounter with an Egyptian to illustrate the one-sidedness of an orientalist discourse. He writes, “...she never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence or history. *He* spoke for and represented her.”<sup>85</sup> [SIC] For Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad, this is an important, if not *the*, point. By and large, in the corpus of written representation of the East to the West prior to the mid-twentieth century, Said argues there were little to no Eastern sources consulted by Western writers. When commenting on Britain’s Lord Balfour and his governance over Egypt, Said even notes, “It does not occur to Balfour, however, to let the Egyptian speak for himself...”<sup>86</sup> To his credit, Said is aware of this. The importance of Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad in this regard and in this research is that they do speak for themselves after their own encounters with the West. And whereas Said states that “Our initial description of Orientalism as a learned field now acquires a new concreteness. A field is often an enclosed space. The idea of representation is a theatrical one: the Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confined,” Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad prove Said wrong here because they are not confined to the East.<sup>87</sup> Importantly, they have expanded this ‘stage’ to include their encounters and experiences with the West while in the West.

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<sup>84</sup> Said, Edward. Orientalism. New York: Vintage Press, 1978, p. 2.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

Additionally, Said is discredited when he states, “The Orientalist can imitate the Orient without the opposite being true.”<sup>88</sup> One need only read Qutb’s article *The World Is An Undutiful Boy!* as a starting point to understand how Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad have shown Said’s statement to be a flawed and inaccurate one. In their later writings, these thinkers undermine Said’s argument by making their own arguments against the West using Western intellectual ideas from thinkers such as Marx, Engels, Foucault, and Gramsci to support their critiques. In essence, they have ‘imitated’ the West, to use Said’s term, while drawing from the arsenal of Western intellectual ideas as ammunition for their arguments.

The final instance where Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad prove Said wrong is when Said states, “But the crucial index of Western strength is that there is no possibility of comparing the movement of Westerners eastward (since the end of the Eighteenth Century) with the movement of Easterners westwards.”<sup>89</sup> It is somewhat ironic and perhaps even naïve that Said would make this statement at the time of Orientalism’s publication in 1978, because by then Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad had all died in defense of their anti-Western writings. And as this research will show, their writings prove the opposite of Said’s statement; most of the anti-Western arguments developed by Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad were borne out of their experiences while physically in the West. Hence, to use Said’s phraseology, the Easterners did move westwards, and returned to the East ready to do intellectual battle with the West.

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 160.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 204.

## H. Analytical Literature

Part of the importance of this research lies not only with the development of Islamic political thought in the mid-twentieth century, but its development in terms of ideas *in relation to the West*. The West (whether defined as the US, Europe, or both) and the idea of the West has been singled out by Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad as the catalyst for the development of Islamic political thought in the mid-twentieth century. As part of the argument in this research deals with these thinkers reacting negatively to aspects of the orientalism discourse as articulated by Said, it is necessary to make the further argument that the West utilized an alternative outlook to orientalism.

Michael Oren in his work Power, Faith, and Fantasy writes of the idea of a Western, particularly US, phenomenon called Manifest Destiny. Manifest Destiny was a Nineteenth Century belief in the United States that the US was intended to cross and conquer all of the territory in North America. Oren believes that this idea later infested US colonial/imperial efforts overseas. He writes that, “American missionaries in the Middle East viewed Manifest Destiny not as a blueprint for conquering territory but as a warrant for capturing souls and minds. They continued to disparage Islam as a fraudulent, retrograde faith...”<sup>90</sup> While Western missionary activity is outside the scope of this research, the idea of Manifest Destiny relating to US foreign policy towards the Middle East in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is a force that is arguably present and promoted, more so than an orientalist-type outlook. Most importantly, through the doctrine of Manifest Destiny the US saw an opportunity in its Middle East foreign policy to strengthen the country post WWII in a geo-political sense, and pounced upon it

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<sup>90</sup> Oren, Michael B. Power, Faith, and Fantasy: America in the Middle East 1776 to the Present New York: Norton 2007, p. 131.

voraciously. Though he was writing of missionary activity, Oren drives this point home in the wider US foreign policy context. He writes, “The missionaries’ dedication remained a reflection of the roles that early nineteenth-century Americans arrogated to themselves as the executors of Manifest Destiny, the bearers of industrial age fruits, and democratic benefactors of the world. The missionary fervor was also indicative of the still irrepressible American need for new frontiers, fresh experiences, and movement.”<sup>91</sup> [SIC] Oren continues on to state that the problems of the Middle East, as seen by the US, “could be rectified simply by abandoning Islam and embracing Western culture,” which as Oren has already written includes capitalism and materialism as the ‘fruits of the industrial age,’ as well as secularism under the auspices of the US being the ‘democratic benefactors of the world.’<sup>92</sup> The idea of Manifest Destiny reveals an ego-centric motive in terms of US foreign policy in the Middle East. Though at times ambiguous and contradictory in his assertions, Oren firmly concludes his argument by stating that, “Americans on the whole still saw imperialism as a force leading to positive changes in the Middle East and to improved opportunities for themselves. The Europeans would haul the region out of its obscurity and open it to more vigorous American pursuits – commercial, cultural, and above all, religious.”<sup>93</sup> In doing so, this idea of Manifest Destiny helped to foster the Westernization of much of the Middle East in the twentieth century. Westernization, as Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad saw it, brought capitalism, materialism, and secularism to their doorstep. And this is what truly drew the ire of these thinkers.

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<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 271.

Similar to this in Europe was the idea of the “Production of Space,” which relates to state formation. At its heart, it is an alternative argument for the motive behind European colonialism, in contrast to orientalism. It is an argument primarily concerned with geo-politics. Though related to the mandate system, the post-WWI idea of disseminating defeated European countries land holdings, historically it is the US idea of Manifest Destiny in a European context. The “Production of Space” is essentially one aggressor state wanting to create an area of self-governance in a second state or region, pushing into that second state’s society for the purposes of expansion. Anthony Giddens in The Nation State and Violence argues that sources of power depend upon the management of power through domination over material resources and the activities of people themselves.<sup>94</sup> Essentially, James C. Scott agrees with this in his work Seeing Like a State. He uses what he terms the ‘forest model’ to state that there are “aspects of nature that can be appropriated for human use.”<sup>95</sup> In other words, he is agreeing with the material and geo-political motive behind territorial expansion, or colonialism. In the acquisition of a new space, the aggressor state is trying to “maximize the return of a single commodity over the long haul,” which simultaneously “lends itself to a centralized scheme of management.”<sup>96</sup> The important notion for Scott is potential: what the forest, or the new space/ state, might be used for and replenished with in order to aid the aggressor state. Henri Lefebvre refers to this as the European phenomenon of ‘accumulation’ from the Twelfth to the Nineteenth Centuries in his work The Production of Space. Accumulation for him is the acquisition of “resources: knowledge, technology,

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<sup>94</sup> Giddens, Anthony. The Nation-State and Violence: Volume Two of a Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press 1985, p. 7.

<sup>95</sup> Scott, James C. Seeing Like a State. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1998, p. 13.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

money...”<sup>97</sup> Charles Tilly agrees, in that “European colonizers” actions were “based on the economies of major regions...”<sup>98</sup>

The important thing to note here for the purposes of this research is that in the attainment of these resources, the aggressor state undertakes this action for the benefit of itself, not necessarily because it feels any indigenous population in that new space/ state is somehow backward or in need of reform. Hence, the ideas of Manifest Destiny and the Production of Space share ego-centricity as a motive. In their writings, then, these authors offer a viable and more tangible alternative to orientalism as a European and US motive for its colonial endeavors. In doing so, they have also proved part of the argument of this research. These authors have provided the foundations about the ideas (and outlook) of the West as Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad saw them, and to which they were reacting. Hence, both the ideas of Manifest Destiny and the Production of Space promoted Westernization by the West in the Middle East. This helped set in motion the development of the thoughts and ideas by Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad that would in turn significantly impact Islam’s relationship with the West in the political realm.

Another aspect of what Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad were facing when trying to find a solution to dealing with the West was the challenge of modernity. Robert Hefner makes note of this in Remaking Muslim Politics. Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad espouse the belief that God has sovereignty over all the world, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. In the Quran God has provided a comprehensive paradigm for political and social life,

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<sup>97</sup> Lefebvre, Henri. The Production of Space. Oxford: Blackwell 1991, p. 49.

<sup>98</sup> Tilly, Charles. Contention and Democracy in Europe 1650-2000. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 2004, p. 244.

which Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad believe is transparent.<sup>99</sup> Though modern Islamic political thought obviously did not develop in a vacuum and owes much to past Muslim political thinkers such as Ibn Tayymiah among others, there are certain characteristics that indeed make it unique to the modern era, which for the purposes of this research is the mid-twentieth century. As Heffner writes, “the Islamist dream of an all-encompassing religious governance bespeaks a modern bias, one all too familiar within the Twentieth Century West.”<sup>100</sup> It is ‘all too familiar’ with the twentieth century West because the actions of the West in the twentieth century were the catalyst for much, if not all, of the above Islamic political thought to develop. Adjacent to colonialism, materialism, and the other forces labeled as corrosive Western exploits by Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad, author Robert D. Lee also indicates that there were “long-promised doses of well-being” [SIC] that would accompany those (Muslims and governments) who would follow the Western paradigm of life and government. Upon the dramatic failure to deliver such promises of development, a plea for authenticity arose amongst many Islamic thinkers; something which was viable and which could compete against this modernity.<sup>101</sup> As Lee states,

“the demand for authenticity reflects the failure of a developmentalism that arose to cure the faults of colonialism, of a liberalism that was supposed to accompany development, and of a modernism that purported to provide the irrefutable logic upon which colonialism, developmentalism, and liberalism were based...The search for authenticity, while dedicated to the destruction of modern impediments to human fulfillment, is equally committed to a program of reconstruction and re-founding. It is a search for new, more robust, more legitimate foundations.”<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Heffner, Robert. *Modernity and the Remaking of Muslim Politics* from Heffner, Robert ed. Remaking Muslim Politics Princeton: Princeton University Press 2005 p. 22.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>101</sup> Lee, Robert D. Overcoming Tradition and Modernity: The Search for Islamic Authenticity Boulder CO: Westview Press 1997 p. 1.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

This is exactly what Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad sought to do in their thinking when they advocated a return to the Islam of Muhammad and the Rashidun. In their minds, it was *the* ‘legitimate foundation’ and was the strongest tool they could rely upon in their defense against the West. Additionally, something more authentic and indigenous in the Islamic tradition one could not find. This was immensely important in two ways. Firstly, Lee notes that, “The rush toward modernity understood as the European way of life had begun and would not relent, both because the European powers sought economic and political advantage and because local statesmen and potentates sought to promote their own power and interests either in cooperation with the Europeans or in opposition to them.”<sup>103</sup> Secondly, Lee notes that tradition was destroyed by the enactment of social changes as a result of the “projection of European power.”<sup>104</sup> In other words, there were forces enacted by the West that need to be stopped in the minds of Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad, and something endemic to all Muslims was needed as the tool to stop them. Mehrzad Boroujerdi uses the term ‘Faustian’ to depict this situation; he states, “By and large, the Iranian intelligentsia viewed their procurement of Western modernity as an adulterous affair, or a Faustian bargain, which they could neither openly brag about nor necessarily be proud of.”<sup>105</sup> Though written for an Iranian context, this notion is easily extrapolated into the greater Sunni and Shi'a Muslim context.

By labeling the West, whether Europe, the US, or both, as *the* source of ills for their individual country’s Muslim populations, as well as the greater Ummah, Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad also helped bridge the Sunni-Shi'a divide. Whereas Hamid

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<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5. Lee also provides an excellent discussion about the onrush of modernity and the reluctance to accept it on p. 7.

<sup>105</sup> Boroujerdi, Mehrzad. *The Ambivalent Modernity of Iranian Intellectuals* from Nabavi, Negin ed. *Intellectual Trends in Twentieth Century Iran* Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida 2003, p. 12.

Enayat writes in Modern Islamic Political Thought that “the distinguishing features of Shi’ism in relation to Sunnism should be sought not only in its fundamental principles, but perhaps more importantly in its ethos...,”<sup>106</sup> Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad could amend that statement because they had found a common link between both sects that would unite the global Ummah. As Enayat writes, “Islamic unity is cherished as an ideal which at times appears to transcend all differences of creed, however fundamental these may be.”<sup>107</sup> Now that a common enemy had been identified, a method indigenous to Islam must be utilized to combat that enemy. Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad believed that by returning to the Islam of Muhammad and the Rashidun, and most importantly using the Quran as a basis for politics, that was an infallible method for restoring God back into Muslim society, which they felt had been lost at the influence of the West. Nazih Ayubi correctly observes in his work Political Islam that in Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad’s choosing religion to act as a method to combat the West and its influences, they had selected something that neither the West nor its governmental allies could appropriate. It is something that belonged internally to the people.<sup>108</sup> Though Ayubi makes a fairly obvious statement, it is still one of importance in this regard and to this research when combined with politics; he states, “For those resisting foreign dominance (political and/or cultural), Islam can provide a medium of cultural nationalism that is both defiant and self-assuring.”<sup>109</sup> In developing and disseminating this line of ideas, Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad were essentially pushing Islamic political thought in a new direction in the mid-twentieth century.

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<sup>106</sup> Enayat, Hamid. Modern Islamic Political Thought London: I.B. Tauris 2005, p. 19. Enayat provides a good general discussion on Sunni-Shi’i unity on p. 41-42.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>108</sup> Ayubi, Nazih. Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Arab World London: Routledge 1991 p. 122

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217.

In their work Muslim Politics, Eickelman and Piscatori essentially argue that tradition in Islamic politics is an invention. In other words, the ‘golden age’ of Islam, the period of the Prophet Muhammad and the Rashidun may not actually have been such a pristine time as figures such as Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad would like their audience to believe. Eickelman and Piscatori indicate that Islamic vocabulary is enhanced and made more appealing in times of crisis. This vocabulary, then, is comprised not only of symbols, but also of those who fashion the symbols and put their particular stamp upon the language for the means of achieving a particular purpose.<sup>110</sup> Hence, when Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad ask their respective audiences to look back to the ‘golden age’ of Islam, they are doing so for comparative purposes in the face of Western encroachment, influence, and to use Al-e Ahmad’s phrase, cultural hegemony. And though Olivier Roy writes of how Islam as a political system has essentially failed, with the exception of Iran, in The Failure of Political Islam, on an individual basis, this research would argue that he is incorrect. While Roy is right in the sense that there are no entirely purely Islamic systems of government in the world today (as even Iran has a popular vote for certain offices) there were individuals who were very real who advocated this system of government and who commanded attention, both then and now. Roy writes that Islam as a political system has failed, particularly in the twentieth century because,

“the failure is primarily an intellectual one. Islamic thought rests on an initial premise that destroys its own innovative elements: on the one hand, as the logic goes, the existence of an Islamic political society is a necessary condition for the believer to achieve total virtue; but on the other hand, such a society functions only by the virtue of its members, beginning with its leaders. In short, the development of Islamist thought, which is political par excellence, ends up dislocating itself from every component of politics, seeing them as mere instruments for raising moral standards and thereby returning, but a different route, to the traditional perception of the

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<sup>110</sup> Eickelman, Dale and Piscatori, James. Muslim Politics Princeton: Princeton University Press 1996, p.13.

ulemas and the reformists, in whose eyes Muslims need only be virtuous for society to be fair and Islamic.”<sup>111</sup>

This outlook is also echoed by John Esposito in his work Islamic Politics. He writes that “there prevails a general consensus that Muslims have failed to produce a viable political and social synthesis that is both modern and true to their history and values.”<sup>112</sup> Yet he is astute enough to recognize that this failure was “reflected in Muslim literature in the late 1960’s, in its growing criticism of the West and its concern to reclaim historical and cultural identity... For the religiously oriented, the problem had always been clear – departure from the straight path of Islam was doomed for failure.”<sup>113</sup> This sentiment is nicely complimented by W. Montgomery Watt’s work Islamic Political Thought. He writes that the rights of man are secondary to the commandments of God in the Quran, to which Muslims are, in a general manner, consciously more attuned.<sup>114</sup>

This research takes the position that the failure of an Islamic political system to take hold in a country in the mid-twentieth century is not an intellectual failure. Hamid Enayat makes the argument, which this research agrees with, that “What, then, differentiates the present phase of limited Sunni-Shi’i concord from the past is that, apart from being necessitated by the political expediency of maintaining a united front in the face of external enemies, it is accompanied by a considerable degree of intellectual harmony.”<sup>115</sup> With figures such as Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad leading the way as intellectuals, they have clearly developed a corpus of thought which is more than intellectually adequate to draw upon for governmental purposes. Roy is correct,

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<sup>111</sup> Roy, Olivier. The Failure of Political Islam Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1994 p. x.

<sup>112</sup> Esposito, John. Islam and Politics Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press 1984, p. 158.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>114</sup> Watt, W. Montgomery. Islamic Political Thought Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press 1968, p. 121.

<sup>115</sup> Enayat, Hamid. Modern Islamic Political Thought London: I.B. Tauris 2005, p. 51.

however, in saying that a political society based upon Islamic mores, as Charles Tripp depicted, is entirely dependant for its functionality upon its members and leaders. While the intellectual aspect may have been strong, its leadership aspect was weak. This is exactly what Qutb railed against in his writings, and for that matter Shariati and Al-e Ahmad as well. It was the weakness of the individual, not the weakness of the ideology, that lead to, for the purposes of this research, the West having an immensely influential aura over many Muslims and Muslim Middle Eastern countries. In fact, one aspect of contemporary Muslim life that was most irksome to Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad were those Muslims who paid “lip service” to Islam.<sup>116</sup> In other words, they were essentially Muslims in name only. Certainly, with these thinkers as examples, Islamic political thought did not fail as Roy contends on an intellectual basis. It was the leadership that failed, and to which Lee agrees. Shariati made allusion to this when he wrote that it was for thinkers within society like him to construct the ideology. It was for others to implement it. Author Negin Nabavi also believes Shariati’s sentiment is true. He writes, “Therefore in order to recover the past, tradition had to be re-integrated into life. In other words, it had to be re-interpreted, brought in line with a creative present, and given new meaning. This was the task of the writers, artists, and thinkers, and not the job of the establishment.”<sup>117</sup> As Heffner again writes, this religio-political ideology and intellectualism is vulnerable to distortion if accountability is given to governmental elite figures of state.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Lee, Robert D. Overcoming Tradition and Modernity: The Search for Islamic Authenticity Boulder CO: Westview Press 1997 p. 7

<sup>117</sup> Nabavi, Negin. The Discourse of ‘Authentic Culture’ in Iran in the 1960’s and 1970’s from Nabavi, Negin ed. Intellectual Trends in Twentieth Century Iran Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida 2003, p. 100.

<sup>118</sup> Heffner, Robert. Modernity and the Remaking of Muslim Politics from Heffner, Robert ed. Remaking Muslim Politics Princeton: Princeton University Press 2005 p. 23.

That is why Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad were figures of such importance. It was they who kept the ideological fires burning in trying to combat the West. As Giles Kepel notes in Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam, unification around any ‘-isms’ created at the end of WWII were nothing more than fiction during the 1960’s and 1970’s in the Middle East. Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad felt a real and viable need for the global Ummah to move forward, in a direction away from Western influence and all it entailed. In designating the West as the universal source of the current collective Muslim predicament, labeling the West as God-less, and turning to Islam and the Quran as the political means most suited to oppose the West, Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad forged a new direction in the development of mid-twentieth century Islamic political thought.

## V. Case Studies of Individuals

Qutb, Shariati and Al-e Ahmad represent the contemporary (twentieth century) foundations of Islamist ideology. In developing their respective ideologies, these figures have furthered the development of Islamic political thought in relation to the West along radical lines. The value and importance of their contribution to the development of Islamic political thought, and to this research, lies in the immediacy of the circumstances of their encounter with the West. Hence, their thought in this regard will be used to anchor this research.

### 1. Sayyid Qutb

Political Islam, or Islamism, is one of the most critical movements within Islam in the 20-21<sup>st</sup> Centuries. The combination of both political and religious elements within Islam is not a new phenomenon. Rather, it has long been an aspect of this religious

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tradition. In the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and into the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century, it has undergone a vivacious resurgence and taken on an increasingly radical, and violent, tone. One figure at the heart of this modern renaissance was Sayyid Qutb. Qutb was an Egyptian Muslim thinker active from the 1940's until his death in 1966 at the hands of the Nasserite government. Qutb was, at one critical point in his life, a member of the Egyptian Ministry of Education. It was during this time that he began to develop a radical strain in his ideology regarding Islam, the British-influenced Egyptian government, and most importantly the greater Egyptian Muslim population. As a result of what he believed modern materialism and the influences of Westernized countries were bringing to Egypt, he believed he was seeing Egypt's Muslims lose their root belief system in Islam. In other words, Egyptian Muslims were becoming less and less Islamic.

His belief that Muslims were putting materialism before God in their collective lives caused him to begin to lash out at these perceived destructive forces, in both word and action. Sensing this trend in Qutb's thought, the Ministry of Education sent Qutb to the US where it was hoped that his radical tone would diminish after being immersed in a more open and liberal Western culture than that of Europe and Britain. Yet this was not the only purpose in sending Qutb out of Egypt. The Ministry of Education was at the same time attempting to distance themselves from the radical ideologue that Qutb was fast becoming, for fear of reprisals at having such a tempestuous figure as a government official.

The desired effect of the Ministry of Education's plan backfired on a massive scale. Upon his return from the US, where he never obtained the intended Masters Degrees, Qutb was horrified at what he had seen. He subsequently became arguably the

leading ideologue for the reform of Muslim society, now both Egyptian and global, by a return to what he called true Islam – a rejection of the Egyptian government (for that matter, any secular government as well), and material culture, both of which he saw as heavily Western-influenced.<sup>119</sup>

It is Qutb's time in America that is of particular interest for the purposes of this research. It appears that his experiences while in the US are, in part, what caused him to make the final and permanent shift towards a radical ideology. Consultation of his original works such as Milestones (or sometimes translated as Signposts Along the Road) and Social Justice In Islam, will help to uncover the trail of Qutb's ideological shift.

## 2. Ali Shariati

In the turbulent times of the 1940's and 1950's, Ali Shariati came of age. Born on 24 November 1933 into a family of modest means in Iran, Ali Shariati was to become one of Iran's leading political thinkers upon whose thought Ayatollah Khomeini drew heavily for the Revolution of 1979.

Shariati was born to a family where Islam was regarded as more of a philosophical and social endeavor than a personal and private experience.<sup>120</sup> This nature of Islam within the Shariati household would have an interesting effect on Shariati as he was growing up. Based on his own recollections, he underwent a serious identity crisis between 1946 and 1950. During the transition into adolescence, a traditional custom of Iranian middle class youth of the latter 1940's was to become familiar and associate

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<sup>119</sup> Tripp, Charles. *Sayyid Qutb: The Political Vision*. From Rahnema, Ali ed. Pioneers of Islamic Revival (Second Edition). London: Zed Books, 2005.

<sup>120</sup> Rahnema, Ali. *Ali Shariati: Teacher, Preacher, Rebel*. From Rahnema, Ali ed. Pioneers of Islamic Revival (Second Edition). London: Zed Books, 2005, p. 210.

themselves with the literature that their fathers were reading and had previously read.<sup>121</sup> Shariati followed this custom, and was exposed to the philosophical works of both Persia and Europe. Upon completion, Shariati recalled that his religious foundations were shaken to the core. His conviction of the existence of God was suddenly overshadowed by looming doubt. As a result of the possibility of life without God, Shariati's life itself became a barren oasis to the degree that he contemplated ending it. Yet in one final attempt to re-assure himself, he became entranced with a particular mystic in Oriental philosophy, Mowlavi, and his crisis passed.<sup>122</sup> Ali Rahnema states that Shariati would later characterize mysticism, along with equality and freedom, as the three historical goals of mankind, and the elemental qualities of the ideal man.<sup>123</sup>

By the time he entered Mashhad's Teacher Training College, Shariati was again in crisis. He was at odds about how to obtain and develop these qualities of the ideal man, and questioning the responsibility and role of man on earth. By 1952, at the tender age of nineteen, he believed he had resolved this crisis. He discovered Islam as the way to recognize and define what ideal life should look like and be.<sup>124</sup> Life again, for Shariati, was meaningful. Yet during this time, there was also another factor that aided in this revitalization. Shariati came to believe that politics was the state upon which the meaning of life through Islam was to be played out. This culminated in the arrival of Mossadeq's nationalist movement in Iran.<sup>125</sup> Shariati participated in rallies, discussions and meetings of this movement, and though the extent of his association is unknown, it is certain that he had found the ideal blend of Islam and politics.

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<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 212.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 212.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 212.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 214.

However, Shariati's new-found joy would be short lived. In 1953, the US sponsored a coup to overthrow Mossadeq and restore the Shah of Iran to power. By August of 1953, the nationalist and anti-imperialist tendencies of Iran's youth were silenced. Resistance was dealt with harshly, and the prevailing mood of the country was reflected in Shariati's writings of that time. From 1956-1958, all that Shariati had worked so hard toward and believed in was again called into question forcing another identity crisis not only personally and internally but among Iranians as a whole.<sup>126</sup> Iran's indigenous track of history had been altered, and in doing so revealed a web of alliances that would become the focus of Iranians anger, especially among its youth. This alliance consisted of: the Iranian Monarchy (the Shah) and its military, a segment of the clergy represented by Ayatollah's Behbahani and Kashani, and perhaps most prominently the US.<sup>127</sup>

Shariati, displaying a perceptive knowledge of alliteration, coined the phrase "Zar-o Zoor-o Tazvir", which caught on in Persian society as a phrase that signified wealth (meaning capitalism), coercion (meaning dictatorship of the Shah and the imperialism of the US), and deceit (meaning the role the official clergy played).<sup>128</sup> Clearly, the coup effected Shariati in a deep and profound way. In many instances, life provides circumstances that can draw one further into an ideology in an intangible manner. 1955 was one of those circumstances for Ali Shariati. Upon entering the Faculty of Literature at the University of Mashhad, Shariati was to meet a woman named Pouran-e Shariat Razavi, whom he was to marry three years later in 1958. Fewer than four months after the coup, on 7 December 1953, a student protest was held at Tehran

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

University to demonstrate against the visit of Richard Nixon, the Vice President of the United States. During that rally, the Iranian army opened fire on the students, killing three. One of those three was Azar Shariat Razavi; he was the brother of Pouran.<sup>129</sup>

Shariati was awarded a scholarship for academic merit to study abroad, and rather interestingly given his disdain for both the US and Europe, he accepted it and left Iran to study in Paris in 1959. In a double-sided experience, Shariati reveled in the enlightenment and exchange of ideas he discovered while in Paris, but loathed the materialism, amorality, and a-religiousness he felt was inseparable from Western society.<sup>130</sup> After returning to Iran, Shariati was offered a position at the University of Mashhad, where in 1969, he published Eslamshenasi, or Islamology. Eslamshenasi's purpose was tri-fold: to present Islam as the way forward, or solution, in government which directly opposed the Shah's regime; to identify the obstacles to that solution which included the Shah and the US; to show Muslims that it was necessary for them to prevail over these obstacles.<sup>131</sup> Other works such as Man and Islam would eventually lead to Shariati's death in London, presumed to be at the hands of the Iranian secret police, SAVAK, in 1977, but never proven.

### 3. Jalal Al-e Ahmad

Jalal Al-e Ahmad was one of Islam's and Iran's most conscientious social commentators. He was born in Tehran in 1923 to the family of a Shi'ite cleric, and raised there. At an early age, he showed promise in academics, especially in Islamic studies and

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<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 218.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229-230.

literature.<sup>132</sup> Encouraged by his father, Ahmad mastered Arabic, in addition to French and English, and later attended the University of Tehran where he eventually obtained his doctorate in Persian literature.<sup>133</sup> His writings began to appear in Iran in 1946, and by the later 1960's was recognized as a prominent Iranian and Islamic author.<sup>134</sup>

Ahmad's university years are credited with his entrance into the political realm of Iran and Islam. He joined the Tudeh party in roughly 1944, and became one of its most influential speakers within a very short time. He went on to become the editor of *Mardum*, the party newspaper, but left the party and politics altogether around 1948 as he felt his involvement in the party would hamper his dream of becoming a prominent writer.<sup>135</sup> Shortly thereafter, the Tudeh party was forced to go underground by the Pahlevi regime.<sup>136</sup> Much like Shariati, from 1951 to 1953 (and during the period of oil nationalization) Ahmad supported the regime of Muhammad Mossadeq but was devastated at his removal during the 1953 CIA sponsored coup. On the heels of Ahmad's re-entry into active politics, he was arrested by SAVAK. From that point forward, he re-entered the political realm and became a voice for the Iranian and Islamic intelligentsia in the 1950's and 1960's.<sup>137</sup> Yet Ahmad was to accomplish this task in a manner that made sense for him, and made good use of his specific talents. He would use the pen as his instrument of attack.<sup>138</sup> Though his writings took many forms from novels to short

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<sup>132</sup> Hashemi, M. R. Jalal Al-e Ahmad: A Short Biography. *Bangladesh Moves* Vol. 1, Issue 11, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 13 December 2006.

<sup>133</sup> NA. Author biography: Jalal Al-e Ahmad 1923-1969. Washington, D.C.: Mage Publishers, nd. Website: [www.mage.com](http://www.mage.com).

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> Hashemi, M. R. Jalal Al-e Ahmad: A Short Biography. *Bangladesh Moves* Vol. 1, Issue 11, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 13 December 2006.

<sup>136</sup> NA. Jalal Al Ahmad. Iran Chamber Society (non-profit think tank). [www.iranchamber.com](http://www.iranchamber.com)

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Hashemi, M. R. Jalal Al-e Ahmad: A Short Biography. *Bangladesh Moves* Vol. 1, Issue 11, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 13 December 2006.

stories, his audience and his target(s) were clear: he was writing for the Iranian people, and Muslims at large, about the abusive power of the Shah and the influence of the West.

His most popular and well-known work is entitled Gharbzadegi or ‘Weststruckness’ (sometimes translated as ‘West-toxication’), written in 1962. Of all his works, this offers the most criticism of the Shah and the West. It is unique in Iranian literature in that it is the first work to deal with Iran’s ever-growing social problems, with the blame placed squarely in the hands of the West. Perhaps more importantly for the research presented here, Gharbzadegi is a blatant account of Western intrusion into the indigenous affairs of both Iran and Islam.

For his efforts and attempts to raise Iranian and Islamic consciousness about the West, the Shah banned all of Ahmad’s writings. Ahmad died by mysterious circumstances in seclusion in northern Iran in 1969. His brother, Shams, maintains that he was poisoned by SAVAK agents.<sup>139</sup>

## VI. Primary Sources

Because this research will focus on the development of Islamic political thought in the mid-twentieth century using these three figures, there are certain primary texts that are extremely important and valuable in this development given the window of each figure’s encounter. The sources chosen for each case study were selected because of their specific anti-Western content, and how this content was developed throughout each work, and subsequently over time. The primary sources were consulted in the original language of each case study where available: Qutb in Arabic, Shariati and Al-e Ahmad in Farsi. English translations were also consulted for comparison. (Please see bibliography)

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<sup>139</sup> NA. Jalal Al Ahmad. Iran Chamber Society (non-profit think tank). [www.iranchamber.com](http://www.iranchamber.com)

The method of interpretation used for these sources was essentially endo-centric. In other words, an “inside-out” perspective was utilized. This research examined Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad’s writings from their own internal perspective, as much as possible, based upon their own written experiences looking outward at their encounters with the West. In doing so, this research sought to uncover their raw and un-masked first-hand view of the West. No type of perspective was consciously super-imposed upon the interpretation of these case studies’ writings, such as an orientalist one or a “Clash of Civilizations” one. This was done in an attempt to provide a historically accurate representation of each case study’s writings.

The primary works of Sayyid Qutb for this research will be: A Child From the Village (Tifl Min al-Qaryah), Social Justice in Islam (Al-‘Adalah al-ijtima’iyah fi’l-Islam), Milestones (Ma’Alim Fi’l Tariq) [sometimes translated as Signposts along the Road], The World is an Undutiful Boy!, and The America I Have Seen. Each of these works is important in their own right. A Child from the Village, written in 1946, is Qutb’s recounting of his childhood in an Egypt undergoing the pangs of modernization. It is highly reflective of his disquiet for/of social justice in both the past and the future. As it is the last work of his to be written before his time in the US, it represents a good base from which to start when examining the shift in his thinking towards radicalism. The World is an Undutiful Boy! was an article written by Qutb in the University of Northern Colorado’s student magazine, Fulcrum, in 1949. Clearly distraught with first hand knowledge of what he thought American society was like, Qutb wrote this article where the ‘undutiful boy’ is clearly meant to be the US, and in part the Ummah who was following their path instead of God’s. This article was followed up by his memoirs of his

time in the US entitled “*The America I Have Seen*” published in 1951 in the Egyptian magazine al-Risala. It is a scathing critique of the US and Western values. Social Justice in Islam (published in 1949 while away in the US) and Milestones (published in 1964 and the work cited by Nasser for which Qutb was executed) represent the heart of Qutb’s radical Islamic ideology.

The primary works of Ali Shariati consulted here will include: Religion vs. Religion, which emerged from two lectures given at the Husayniyah Center in Tehran on 12 and 13 August, 1970. In it, he argues that monotheism has fought throughout history with atheism and polytheism. It can easily be extrapolated that the US and Europe represents the latter. What Is To Be Done? (Chih Bayad Kard?) stems from a collection of Shariati’s lectures from Husayniah Irshad throughout the 1970’s and deals with such questions as what is the role of man in society? In these lectures, he moves to insert himself as one of Islam’s intelligentsia, thereby allowing him to create ideology, and emerge as a self-styled exegete. Man and Islam (Isnan va Islam) is a series of lectures Shariati delivered throughout various universities in Iran during his lifetime. For the purposes of this research, Shariati’s Islamic world view and the limitations of the material world will be focused upon, as they most directly relate to Shariati’s thoughts on the West. Arguably the most notable work of Shariati’s relating to the West is entitled On the Sociology of Islam (Eslamshinasi).

Jalal Al-e Ahmad’s primary works that will be utilized in this research are: Iranian Society, The School Principal, and By the Pen (Nun va al-Qalam). Perhaps most importantly, West-Struckness (Gharbzadegi), a work of paramount importance for this research, was written in 1962 at a time when the Shah of Iran (and the Pahlavi dynasty)

appeared to be exerting a strangle-hold on not only Iranian society, but Islamic history. As a result, Al-e Ahmad felt that there was nothing but capitulation and submission to the Shah, but more importantly to the West, by the Ummah. The Shah was nothing but a puppet for Western domination. In a return to historical and religious criteria, Al-e Ahmad sought to counter the influence of the West, and bolster Iran and Islam in the process.

All of these works reflect each figure's circumstances of encounter with the West. Their writings reveal that each figure was staunchly against laicism or the secular control of those political and/or social institutions of society. To laicize society would be depriving it of clerical and thus religious guidance. More importantly, this action would be tantamount to ignoring or abandoning God and Islam. Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad believed that in order to live and govern properly, politics must be based on Islam's doctrinal sources, the Quran and the Hadith. The largest impediment in their eyes to achieving this lay in the values that the West espoused and tried to disseminate throughout the world and the Middle East.

## VII. Layout of Chapters

### Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter provides the outline and framework of this research. It will provide the general nature of the research to be presented in this thesis, and will also state why this research is important. Additionally, it will include an ideational structures explanation, a definition of terms section, a heart of research section, a primary sources section, and a conclusion that will preset a chapter layout of this research.

## Chapter Two: Historical Context – Jamal al-Din al-Afghani

This chapter examines the historical context of mid-twentieth century Islamic political thought. The focus is on Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, and his pan-Islamic stance. The development of this stance in the nineteenth century was a nascent attempt to unify the global Ummah around the religion of Islam. Ultimately, this stance failed, in part because of Afghani's personality, but more so because Islam was and is different depending on where one is located in the Middle East. Yes, there are common tenets that all Muslims share, but by and large, Islam is rooted in the cultures and traditions of the geography of its inhabitants. In other words, Islam in Iraq is different than Islam in Egypt, which in turn is different than Islam in Iran. Though this pan-Islam idea failed to generate a mass movement, the idea of unification and solidarity as a practical means of resistance gained importance in the arena of Islamic political thought. Fruitless though his own efforts were, this idea is where Afghani's importance lies in this research.

## Chapter Three: Sayyid Qutb

From Egypt, Sayyid Qutb was the first among those who would later be referred to as Islamists to follow Afghani's model of searching for a universal principle through which the global Ummah could unite. He recognized the fact that Islam had too many geographical and cultural variations to unify the Ummah simply over the fact that all were Muslim. Based upon his first hand experiences in encountering the West, he posited a more effective method of unification. He believed that all Muslims had a common enemy in the West due to its colonial efforts in the Middle East, and the

transmission of a materialistic, capitalistic, and imperialistic way of life, at the heart of which God was absent. In order to restore God to greater Muslim life, and combat the encroachment of the West both into the Middle East and into Muslim minds, Qutb believed it was necessary to implement the Quran as a/the system of government. To remove God from any aspect of life, including politics, would be a transgression of the greatest magnitude.

#### Chapter Four: Ali Shariati

Very much in the same mould as Qutb, Ali Shariati further developed Islamic political thought in relation to the West due to his experiences with the West as one who lived in Europe (Paris) while studying for his doctorate at the Sorbonne. He returned to Iran and produced a massive corpus of work that was anti-Western in nature. His focus was on the regime of the Shah and of European and US involvement in Iranian politics. He furthered the work of Qutb in that he also identified the West and its materialism, capitalism, and colonialism as a factor around which all Muslim could unite. Muslims, this time Shi'ite, were being threatened by the God-less West and must return to the Quran as a basis for government in order to stop the influence of corrupt Western ideas invading Muslim minds, and also stop Western involvement in Iranian politics.

#### Chapter Five: Jalal Al-e Ahmad

Jalal Al-e Ahmad represents a nice compliment to both Qutb and Shariati in the nature of this research because of the fact that his writing is very allegorical; he is able to craft works of seeming fiction but with a transparent moral and story underneath. These

morals and stories are often mirror images of the rhetoric that both Qutb and Shariati developed in their own respective works. Because his writing style was more story-like prose and less philosophical than either Qutb or Shariati, he was able to reach an additional audience that Qutb and Shariati may not have reached and in a language more reticent but with the same message as Qutb and Shariati. Again, in his works Al-e Ahmad focused his attention on the materialism, colonialism, etc. of the West, and labeled the West as the source of the problems that beleaguered both the Iranian Muslim community and the global Ummah. These characteristics of the West stemmed from the fact that he saw the West as God-less, and that the influence of the West in this regard was beginning to affect his fellow Muslims. A return to God was the necessary solution, but in and through politics with the Quran as the centerpiece.

### Chapter Six: Conclusion

A conclusion will briefly re-state the argument(s) presented in this research. Additionally this conclusion will state what this research, based on the argument(s) presented, has contributed to the field of study of Islamic political thought.

## **Chapter 2: Historical Context**

### **Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and the Idea of Pan-Islam**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to place this research in a historical context. This context will illuminate the foundations that Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad were to build upon in their own quest for an indigenous Islamic solution to the problems they believed the West posed to the Ummah. They would do this, in part, by developing and utilizing some of the ideas postulated by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani in the nineteenth century. This historic context is essentially the basis for the future of ‘modern’ Islamic political thought. It is a necessary aspect in that this research will argue that there was a precedent of great importance being followed, which would be continued and developed at a later point in time. Establishing this context is at the heart of the chapter itself: the pan-Islamic stance of Afghani was one of the constituent elements that Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad were to use in furthering their own ideas on the development of Islamic political thought in relation to the West. Afghani’s pan-Islam planted the seeds around which all Muslims could unite for the purposes of defending Islam against the encroachment of the West into Muslim lands throughout the 1800’s. This idea is something that would not be lost ideologically and historically upon his successors.

Islamic political thought took time to develop. What today is referred to as political Islam, or Islamism, is only a part of this development, but an extremely important part. Jamal al-Din al-Afghani is a foundational figure of political Islam as a ‘modern’ phenomenon, and it is only fitting that a multi-faceted character gave rise to a multi-faceted discipline. When attempting to understand the origins of ‘modern’ political

Islam, it is important to bear in mind the ideas set forth by Marx, Engels, Foucault, and Gramsci. This research argues that one sees in Afghani an example of the practical application of these ideational structures. The feeling of solidarity that was posited theoretically by Gramsci can be applied, in a real and historical sense in terms of political Islam, to Afghani's pan-Islamic stance: the idea that people from various backgrounds should unite because they are Muslim. Hence, as Afghani laid the seeds for pan-Islam, he also began to build the foundation for political Islam. Though Afghani's encounter with the West was European-centered, it was an easy transition for his successors, Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad, to include the US in this encounter.

#### *A Brief Overview*

Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838/9-1897) was a man of complexities and contradictions. All aspects of his life and work, including where he was originally from, involve some form of controversy. Though there is no question that he had a fervent passion for Islam throughout his lifetime, it is uncertain whether he was passionate for the religious dimensions or the political aspects that he wished to attach to it. This ambiguity was reflected in the fact that although he was an Islamic activist in its broadest sense, he was in essence an 'ideologue for hire.' He traveled to wherever his ideas attracted those in power, remaining in a certain location for a time until his teachings and thought would antagonize a ruler, prompting his expulsion. From there he would move on to another location to repeat the process. As a result, Afghani seems to have assumed roles for himself that did not actually exist and expected political favors that never came. What is clear, however, is that no matter where his travels brought him, Afghani did like to be surrounded by those in governmental power. The evidence of his life creates a

picture of a man who was an ‘ideologue laureate’ but who was, in reality, a politico-religious agitator.

During his nomadic lifetime, Afghani’s thought developed, for all intents and purposes, as a result of the circumstances around him. Two of the most notable elements in his ideology were his rabid anti-British attitude, and his desire to create an indigenous Islamic response to the threats that ‘Western’ encroachment placed upon Muslim lands. Afghani ultimately combined these elements under the guise of pan-Islam, the idea that all Muslims regardless of their different local customs, traditions, languages, etc. should unite behind the common tenets of the religion of Islam. Yet like any conscientious ideologue, the thoughts that would comprise Afghani’s pan-Islam developed gradually. By that time, Afghani had already lived in, and been evicted from, several countries and accrued a reputation as a caustic activist.

Interestingly, many scholars have a problem with Afghani’s pan-Islam. Perhaps in historical hindsight, this criticism is levied because of several factors, most notably, that his pan-Islam was at first glance comprised of elements too disparate to form a cohesive ideology. Because of Afghani’s personality and trademark characteristic of trying to get himself noticed politically, his pan-Islamic stance draws fire as a ploy to do just that. Given these criteria, it is easy to point the finger at Afghani and accuse him of being a charlatan. Yet in his defense, the time in which he lived was one of momentous change. It was a time that was to essentially begin the shaping of the modern Middle East. The role and future of Islam in the region was certainly something that was at stake. As such, the debate over Afghani and whether or not he was truly an advocate of pan-Islam, is a heated and important one.

In order to untangle the complexities of Afghani's pan-Islam, it is necessary to trace his history, actions, and ideology so as to determine how he arrived at creating such an ideology. This will determine the extent of his advocacy. In doing so, it is important to keep clear the fact that his pan-Islam has elements that he treats, at times, as individual. At other times, based upon his medieval philosophical influences, he uses each element as he deems necessary to compliment other elements depending upon his audience. Understanding Afghani is to be aware that he does this, often without warning.

Ultimately, no matter how disparate the components of Afghani's pan-Islam and how interchangeably he uses them, Afghani was in fact advocating unity among all Muslims. He sought to use this unity as a method indigenous to Islam for combating the colonialism and corruptive forces of the West.

#### *The Life of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani*

Though claiming to be from Afghanistan, Jamal al-Din was in fact from Iran. He received his early education in the shrine cities of Iraq (Najaf, Kerbala, etc.) and perhaps more importantly, in the Shi'ite tradition.<sup>140</sup> Why was it important that Afghani was educated in the Shi'ite tradition? Two of the most controversial areas of Afghani's life centered around his nationality and his religious orthodoxy, both of which are tied to one another. Afghani himself, and later his cadre of loyal disciples, maintained that he was born and raised in Afghanistan. This would have made him a follower of the majority Sunni Islam. Others contended, including historian Nikki Keddie and which has subsequently been proven true, that Afghani was born and raised in Iran, and educated in the minority Shi'i Islam, the now state religion of Iran. The question of Afghani's

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<sup>140</sup> Keddie, Nikki. Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani: A Political Biography. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1972, p 15-16.

nationality is tied to his orthodoxy in that throughout his life, there were numerous incidents that pointed to Afghani's unorthodoxy, and even irreligion, which his followers were at a loss to explain away. No matter his religious preference within Islam, if he claimed to be one and was actually the other, it would look as if he was in fact an unbeliever or irreligious. As a result, it is easy to see how Afghani's nationality generated so much controversy and confusion regarding his religious views.<sup>141</sup>

### *The Early Afghani: Surrounding Events*

In his early education, Afghani received a basis in traditional Islamic disciplines as well as Islamic and Persian philosophy, and Sufism, the mystical sect of Islam. These early disciplines, particularly Persian philosophy, influenced him enormously in his later years and would eventually figure heavily into his thought.<sup>142</sup> One prominent aspect worth noting here was Afghani's fascination with *Taqiyya*, or the precautionary dissimulation of true beliefs, whereby he would use different arguments for different audiences, depending upon whom he was addressing. This was a feature particular to Iranian Shi'ism, Sufi mystics, and Hellenized philosophers. Keddie indicates that this practice was more of a Shi'i observance than a Sunni one.<sup>143</sup> It is important, though, as it is one of the cornerstones of Afghani's rhetorical style, and is something that he was constantly criticized for. Because of this particular feature of Afghani's persona, it becomes easier to see why he was labeled as contradictory, and why some aspects of his thought were considered incongruent with other aspects. Ultimately, however, his thought was dependant upon the audience that was interpreting it.

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<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2. It is also interesting to note that Jamal ad-Din did not refer to himself as "al-Afghani" until 1869, after being expelled from Afghanistan and claiming to be of Afghan birth and decent.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

In addition to the philosophers he studied as a child, he also reacted to the politico-religious tumult in Iran in the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries, particularly manifest in the Shaikhi and Babi movements, which challenged Shi'i orthodoxy. These movements occurred during Afghani's childhood in Iran, and as a result, "he grew up in an environment where disputes and doctrinal innovation were more in the air in religious circles than they were in most of the Sunni world, and this probably affected his own propensity to innovate."<sup>144</sup>

Emerging from his early education, Afghani encountered an Arab world that was not quite deserving of that exact title. In fact, in his work The Arab Awakening, historian George Antonius states that in the Arab world, there were no forces at work that could be defined as nationwide unity. He states:

"Centuries of decadence and misrule had debilitated the collective spirit of its population and loosened its former cohesion. The unifying force generated by the genius of the Prophet Muhammad had remained a force so long as Arab power had remained supreme. As that power waned, its cohesive influence weakened; and the diverse peoples it had welded together into a cultural whole fell gradually asunder to form separate entities, regional and sectarian, according to the district, clan, or creed to which they belonged."<sup>145</sup>

It is important to keep Antonius' sentiment in mind here: under Muhammad the unifying factor of those who would be called Muslims was Islam, and that is what Afghani seemed to recognize, in however convoluted a manner, when he began his advocacy of pan-Islam.

### Afghani's Nomadic Years

After his initial education, Afghani then traveled to India from roughly early 1857 until 1865. Though significant in length of stay, the importance of his Indian sojourn was

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<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19

<sup>145</sup> Antonius, George. The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement. Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1969, p. 32.

that it is most likely where he developed one of the anchors of his ideology: his disdain for British colonial rule in Muslim lands.<sup>146</sup> As the growing gem in their colonial crown, British involvement in India was requiring Britain to look for friendly nations along the Arabian seacoast, so as to facilitate supply and provision stops. In doing so, the British pushed their hands ever deeper into the lands of the Middle East.<sup>147</sup> During this time, India's Muslim community suffered greatly due to dislocation at the hands of British conquest. The Muslim ruling classes of northern India were removed from their positions of power, and were un-likely to attend secularized training schools set up by the British for the purposes of reforming and transforming the state. By not attending British schools, their chances of holding governmental jobs of influence declined. This also held true for their children. Further, the authority of the Ulema declined with the secularization of both the educational and judicial systems. This incited revolts against the British dating from the early nineteenth century until 1863.<sup>148</sup> The historical context of Indian Muslims and foreigners sympathetic to their cause joining forces was to impact Afghani profoundly.<sup>149</sup> It suggests the earliest evidence for what would become Afghani's ideas regarding pan-Islam.

After traveling to Afghanistan from 1866 until 1868, Afghani proceeded to Istanbul, where he remained from 1869 until 1871. Istanbul was a center of strength and modernization within Islamic civilization.<sup>150</sup> Given Afghani's later admiration for

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<sup>146</sup> Keddie, Nikki. Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani: A Political Biography. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1972, p. 24.

<sup>147</sup> Antonius, George. The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement. Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1969, p. 66. The principality of Muscat at the entrance of the Persian Gulf, Aden, and the Island of Perim at the mouth of the Red Sea were occupied by the British between 1839 and 1857.

<sup>148</sup> Keddie, Nikki. Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani: A Political Biography. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1972, p. 27.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

reform, strength, and modernization of Islam, Istanbul was the perfect place in which to establish himself. Afghani's stay coincided with the last stage of the Tanzimat reform period. The general term Tanzimat refers to the period of reform within the Ottoman Empire from 1839 to 1876. Tanzimat reformers deliberately adopted Western European institutions for the purposes of social and political reform.<sup>151</sup> This is clearly something that Afghani identified with. Previously, Ottoman secular bureaucrats seized the opportunity for change and began a program of reforms designed to introduce to Turkey administrative offices and economic opportunities that were already commonplace in Europe.<sup>152</sup> Hence, those in charge of the Ottoman state realized the importance of borrowing Western ideas in order to strengthen their own Empire.<sup>153</sup> If Western institutions and ideas could revitalize the Empire, then they would be emulated.<sup>154</sup>

Riding this tide of reform while in Istanbul, Afghani cleverly inserted himself into various educational circles both official and unofficial. In doing so, he began trying to promote modernized education as a means of self-reform and self-strengthening among Muslims.<sup>155</sup> Afghani was impressed by the power of the West, and ultimately saw this power emanate from scientific and educational advances. He believed that the Muslim world must revive its former open-ness to intellectual advancement, and for Afghani, this included the borrowing of ideas from non-Muslims. Clearly here, the Tanzimat held an

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<sup>151</sup> Esposito, John. *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003 p. 314.

<sup>152</sup> Mardin, Serif. *Religion and Secularism in Turkey* Mardin, Serif. *Religion and Secularism in Turkey* from Hourani, A. (ed.) *The Modern Middle East*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2004 (new edition) p. 351

<sup>153</sup> Dawn, C. Ernst. *From Ottomanism to Arabism: The Origin of an Ideology* from Hourani, A. (ed.) *The Modern Middle East*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2004 (new edition) p. 377.

<sup>154</sup> Mardin, Serif. *Religion and Secularism in Turkey* Mardin, Serif. *Religion and Secularism in Turkey* from Hourani, A. (ed.) *The Modern Middle East*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2004 (new edition) p. 353.

<sup>155</sup> Keddie, Nikki. *Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani: A Political Biography*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1972, p. 60-61.

appealing aura for Afghani.<sup>156</sup> The Tanzimat reformers were aware that in many regards, the West had surpassed the East, yet they believed that Islam and Ottoman culture possessed structural integrity.<sup>157</sup> “All that was necessary,” C. Ernst Dawn writes, “was to borrow certain things from the West and the gap could be closed.”<sup>158</sup>

Despite what may have been good intentions, Afghani’s fervor got the better of him. He gave a lecture at the educational institute Darufunun in late 1870 in Istanbul, which proved to be the catalyst for his ultimate expulsion from Istanbul. The lecture focused on the intellectual superiority of philosophers who have universal validity over the prophets, presumably including Muhammad. He went on to develop this idea by stating that not every historical age or time period is in need of a prophet, but rather an intellectual and learned man. More than likely, the general populace believed that Afghani in fact saw himself as this intellectual and learned man, thereby holding himself above even Muhammad.<sup>159</sup> Based upon actions such as this, one can begin to see how Afghani developed a reputation both in actual life and in historical memory as irreligious, let alone unorthodox. Perhaps more to the point, this reputation painted Afghani as a threat to those in powerful circles in Istanbul. As a result, he was expelled by the government in roughly January–February of 1871.

### Afghani in Egypt: A Critical Time

Afghani’s travels next brought him to Egypt. He remained there from 1871 until 1879, and is perhaps best known to history because of the time he spent there. During a

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<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>157</sup> Dawn, C. Ernst. *From Ottomanism to Arabism: The Origin of an Ideology* from Hourani, A. (ed.) The Modern Middle East. London: I.B. Tauris, 2004 (new edition) p. 378.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 378.

<sup>159</sup> Keddie, Nikki. Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani: A Political Biography. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1972, p. 65-69.

previous forty-day trip to Egypt in 1869, Afghani made quite a favorable impression upon one of Egypt's most prominent politicians, Riyad Pasha. So remarkable was this impression that after expulsion from Istanbul, Pasha invited Afghani to Egypt and gave him a stipend upon which to live from official government funds.<sup>160</sup> Perhaps little did Riyad Pasha know, but this type of 'friendship' was exactly the kind that Afghani sought, no matter where his travels led him. To be invited to a location, given funding, and have a prominent person's ear is something that would characterize Afghani throughout history.

To be invited to Egypt, especially in the manner that he was, must have been an exciting prospect for Afghani. Egypt of the 1870's was undergoing reforms instituted by its ruler, Khedive Ismail, in order to help modernize Egyptian society. Money was spent on new schools, cultural institutions, etc., all with the aim of spreading enlightenment and modern ideas.<sup>161</sup> Given Afghani's previous involvement in educational circles in Istanbul, and his belief that education was a means of self-strengthening for Muslims, the general climate of Egypt at this time seems to have pleased Afghani to no end. Subsequently, he began teaching, that is to say giving private lessons to people in philosophy, math, and theology. He often held sessions in coffee houses, inevitably attracting attention. It was in this manner that he took on arguably his most famous pupil, Muhammad Abduh, in April 1871.<sup>162</sup> Owing to his eloquent and charismatic personality, Afghani was most popular among younger Egyptians, and espoused an originality and non-conformity in his teachings that was apparently most welcome.<sup>163</sup> But was this the

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<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82-83.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83-84.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84-85.

real reason for his popularity among younger Egyptians? In answering this question, Keddie quite perceptively uses the answer of Muhammad Rashid Rida, a disciple of Abduh's: "In the Persian culture area of the Islamic world, the philosophical tradition remained alive until modern times, whereas in the Arabic speaking world, it had virtually died out centuries before."<sup>164</sup> Keddie also notes that this points to a path of rationalism, science, and a fresh understanding of Islam, "a path indigenous to the Islamic world and not involving a whole-hearted acceptance of the superiority of the aggressive and threatening foreigner."<sup>165</sup> In other words, Afghani borrowed ideas from the West, and then adapted them to fit an Islamic context. In the process, he made them into new, fresh ideas that were now within the Islamic tradition. This is the path that he took his disciples down ideologically, away from traditional-ness toward open-minded rationalism that had an "indigenous pedigree."<sup>166</sup>

For Afghani, the esoteric nature of the Quran and its religious dogma formed a bridge between the elite and the masses, unifying them in the common goal of defending Islam from the unbelievers of the imperialist West. Though he spoke differently depending on the audience he was addressing, his ultimate desire was to meld the two divisions of society together into a common political movement. Presumably based on his talk that led to his expulsion from Istanbul, he saw himself as the leader of this common political movement. The wedding of Islamic and Iranian philosophical traditions plus esoteric traditions to practical political goals seems to be the benchmark of

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<sup>164</sup> Rida, Muhammad Rashid. Tarikh al-ustadah al-imam ash-shaikh Muhamad 'Abduh. Cairo: 1931-1947/48, as appears in Keddie: *Ibid.*, p. 86. In a footnote from p. 86, Keddie states that Rida probably accurately describes Afghani's outlook as a "mixture of ancient and modern philosophy and Sufism," along with his methods being closely related to the Batnis (esoterics) in religion.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

Afghani's thought and objectives. In this regard he was unique: non-traditionalist, non-skeptic, and non-Western.<sup>167</sup> This particular niche Afghani seems to have begun honing during his time in Egypt.

While Afghani was acquiring disciples and teaching, the wider Middle East was again changing. At the end of the Russo-Turkish War in 1877, Russian troops occupied the surrounding areas of Constantinople, and the Treaty of San Stefano was implemented. But this treaty was not to last: at the imposition of the British, Russia consented to the revision of the treaty terms. The new treaty, the Treaty of Berlin (1878), increased the discontent and grievances among the Arab population, as it called for the conscription of Arabs to fight for the Turks.<sup>168</sup> Already staunchly anti-British, this most likely increased Afghani's avid disdain for the British, and sparked him into heightened action. As a result, the year 1877 was a critical one for Afghani in three respects: his involvement with newspapers and political journals, his activity with the Freemasons, and his public speeches.

Egypt, by roughly 1875, was known as *the* center for Arabic journalism. Afghani had a major role in helping many newspapers and political journals obtain government licenses throughout the 1870's, as by 1878, many of his connections were now prominent political figures.<sup>169</sup> He and his disciples were at the forefront of the development of political journals and newspapers critical of the Egyptian government and of foreigners' activities in Egypt. This was extremely important in that these publications initiated an enormous public awakening to this situation. In 1879, Afghani wrote an article entitled

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<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>168</sup> Antonius, George. The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement. Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1969, p. 64.

<sup>169</sup> Keddie, Nikki. Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani: A Political Biography. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1972, p. 101.

*The True Reason for Man's Happiness* in which he declared that human contentment emanates from the completion of man's obligation in civilization, particularly the rulers of that civilization.<sup>170</sup> He extrapolated this statement by implying that obedience is to be given only to rulers who are fair and just, but not to those who are greedy or oppressive. Additionally, he wrote that man's own evil deeds are justified by self-love, which is the cause of misfortune and hardship. Man cannot slip the bonds of this hardship unless he resorts to reason in all his affairs. He goes further, relating that men must take it upon themselves to commit commendable acts for the public interest.<sup>171</sup> In another article from February 1879 entitled *Despotic Government*, Afghani stresses how the use of education and reason are intimately connected with political independence and justice, in addition to reiterating themes from *Man's Happiness*.<sup>172</sup> From these articles, it is clear that Afghani had numerous ideas that he felt needed implementation into society, or at least needed to be brought to the attention of society at large. Due to his journalistic endeavors that began in 1877, he now had the forum in which to deliver these ideas. The insights from the articles also revealed that Afghani had a political agenda of his own, and risked alienating himself from those in power in Egypt by making this agenda public.

These articles also reveal another fascinating aspect of Afghani. His focus was not overtly religious, but more political in nature. In an interesting comparison, Keddie sees Afghani as a type of "Islamic Luther," in that he believed religious reform was the only way to introduce material reform and self-strengthening into the Islamic world. Yet, as she later notes, if one looks closely at his work, Afghani was not a religious reformer

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<sup>170</sup> Al-Afghani, Jamal al-Din. *The True Reason for Man's Happiness*. Misr, II, no. 28, 9 January 1879. From Keddie: *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>172</sup> Al-Afghani, Jamal al-Din. *Despotic Government*. Misr, II, no. 33, 14 February 1879. From Keddie: *Ibid.*, p. 106-107.

at all, though he may have regarded himself as one. Hence for Keddie, to understand Afghani it is improper to view him as a religious reformer.<sup>173</sup>

Additionally, Afghani became a member of the Masons in 1877, and became the leader of the Eastern star Lodge in 1878-1879.<sup>174</sup> In his work Afghani and Abduh: An Essay on Religious Unbelief and Political Activism in Modern Islam, historian Ellie Kedourie states, “to be a Freemason was to show one’s dislike of orthodox, traditional religion, the power it gave to ecclesiastics, the hatred and divisions it promoted and perpetuated in society.”<sup>175</sup> Freemasonry and free thinking seem to be closely associated in the Middle East during Afghani’s life. Perhaps more importantly, Kedourie writes that in Freemasonry, Afghani saw “a modern extension of ancient Islamic heterodoxy.”<sup>176</sup> One interesting side note to this time in history was the founding of a secret society in 1875 by five graduates of the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut.<sup>177</sup> Though Antonius does not explicitly say so, this secret organization sounded very much like Middle Eastern chapters of the Freemasons. Intriguingly, once Beirut had come under Abdul Hamid’s territorial rule, Antonius indicates that most of the society’s active members relocated to Egypt sometime around 1877, and before 1880.<sup>178</sup> Is it possible that Afghani knew these men, and that is what led to his Freemason association? Or was Afghani more savvy in this regard than his critics are willing to concede? Did he, perhaps, know exactly what he was doing? Unfortunately, Antonius doesn’t provide an answer. No matter whether these men were associated with Afghani or not, the secret society did

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<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>175</sup> Kedourie, Ellie. Afghani and Abduh: An Essay on Religious Unbelief and Political Activism in Modern Islam. London: Frank Cass and Co., Ltd., 1966, p. 20.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>177</sup> Antonius, George. The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement. Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1969, p. 78.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80-82.

have a political agenda that was alive and well in the Middle East to the degree that Antonius writes “the society’s appeals were the first trumpet-call emitted by the infant Arab movement.”<sup>179</sup> And it is this point that is of most importance here: there were the beginnings of a pan-Arab sentiment in the Middle East. This is something to which Afghani was highly likely to have been attuned. From pan-Arab thinking, pan-Islamic ideology was (and is) not far away. Though the two are obviously different, it is what is behind them that is important: unity around a greater whole.

Afghani’s association with the Freemasons is interesting in terms of the interaction of ideas. The Freemasons at the time were associated with free-thinking; in other words, they were not necessarily tied down to any one particular school of thought. For Afghani, his interaction with them could indicate to his critics that this was a sign of his irreligiousness or even his unorthodoxy, which would have in turn impacted the credibility of the message (a nascent pan-Islam) that he was trying to propagate. In terms of ideas, what he was essentially attempting to do was to enact change within civil society, particularly Muslim civil society, no matter how convoluted this attempt may have seen. How would his association with the Freemasons impact the intellectual outcome of his ideas? Based upon aspects of Marx, Engels, Foucault, and Gramsci’s thought, the uniqueness of the individual nation, and by proxy the individual person en masse, was in danger of being taken over: certainly in Afghani’s experience, by peoples, nations, and more importantly Muslim encounters with the West. And in the process, as Nietzsche makes clear, God is lost to that civil society. Afghani was able to see, or at least begin to see, that the West was punishing Islam through values such as secularism,

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<sup>179</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 85.

materialism, and imperialism. God, as an intangible entity, was also being removed because of these forces.

From the Freemasons core beliefs that Antonius identifies during this period in history, it is not entirely surprising why Afghani would have been attracted to their line of thought. To re-iterate Antonius, the Freemasons were opposed to the divisions that religion prompted within society. Certainly Afghani would have identified this ‘division’ as the Sunni-Shi’a divide. But more than likely, he would have replaced religion with the West as the source of the problem. His ideas which would eventually become labeled as pan-Islam were an attempt to do this and in the process, an attempt at unification of all Muslims.

Afghani also made numerous political speeches to both the educated elite and the masses beginning roughly in 1877 and continuing until 1879. These political speeches, Keddie believes, served as an additional means of awakening and igniting Egyptians’ anger about the government, and how the government had subjected its citizens to “centuries of despotism and submission.”<sup>180</sup> Afghani wanted the people now to rise, and “look at the ancient monuments of Egypt which showed the greatness of their ancestors... and either live like free people or die as martyrs.”<sup>181</sup> As general themes in his speeches, Afghani included anti-British imperialism, attacks against religious fanaticism and political despotism, strengthening of Egypt’s educational system and parliamentary structure, and a call to spread new and innovative ideas amongst Egyptians for the purpose of instilling patriotism.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>180</sup>Keddie, Nikki. Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani: A Political Biography. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1972, p. 101.

<sup>181</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>182</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 111.

Yet all of this pleasure and attention that Afghani was receiving was to be short lived. Khedive Ismail's state spending had become uncontrollable, to the extent that Egypt was now at the mercy of European debt collectors. Under pressure from the British and the French, Ismail abdicated rule of Egypt in June of 1879. His son, Taufiq, was appointed to power by the British shortly thereafter in the same year. Afghani, through his political connections, thought this might be a pristine opportunity. He believed that he had Taufiq's ear and expected to have Taufiq's favor and following for political programs of reform and the loosening of Western control over Egypt. However, quite possibly to Afghani's surprise, this 'favor' never materialized. Afghani resumed his anti-British/foreign rhetoric, indicating that he understood the meaning behind Taufiq's indifference towards him. As time passed, Taufiq grew more complacent with those foreigners who installed him to power, while simultaneously becoming increasingly hostile toward Afghani. The relationship of animosity that developed between the two men came to a head when in August of 1879, Taufiq had Afghani deported.

Because of Afghani's considerable connections and 'influence' among the elite affiliated with both the National Assembly and the masses, he was not a problem to be regarded casually. If Taufiq were to let Afghani's behavior continue on in its current manner, Taufiq ran the risk of losing face with both the masses and the government. In a stealthy but calculated move, Afghani was expelled very suddenly and very quietly before any protests could be made. Notable is Taufiq's timing: he expelled Afghani after the fall of Sharif Pasha's ministry, and before Riyad Pasha had come back to Egypt and

returned to office. As these were both protectors and patrons of Afghani, they had the potential to cause Taufiq enormous problems politically.<sup>183</sup>

Though Afghani's time in Egypt had come to an end, he had left his mark. Arguably, Afghani is most well known in history for the time that he spent there and the disciples that he amassed. He was so effective in this regard, and was able to reach so many of Egypt's young intellectuals, because he was able to provide "a bridge between their traditional culture and the acceptance of various more liberal, rational, and modern approaches – a bridge that came largely from his own philosophical and esoteric Islamic background."<sup>184</sup> Certainly this was something that many young Egyptians had never experienced before, and would pass on to future generations of Muslim exegetes.

#### Afghani and Pan-Islam

During his Egyptian stay, many scholars have argued that Afghani was not associated with pan-Islamic ideas. Yet, Keddie rightly notes that his association with pan-Islam was a result of the cultural situations accruing during the 1870's, especially British aggressions in India, Russian aggressions in Central Asia, and new European efforts of financial penetration and conquest of the Ottoman Empire and surrounding lands.<sup>185</sup> Even though Afghani may not have been an advocate of pan-Islam *per se* at this junction, it is clear that in his ideology there are already elements that could be termed pan-Islamic. Keddie states that it was not difficult for Afghani to transition to pan-Islam, especially in light of Turkish reformer Namik Kemal's ideas. Keddie states:

"How easy and natural it was for one whose primary concern had been reform within the Islamic world to turn also to appeals to pan-Islamic unity is seen in the case of the Ottoman Turkish reformer Namik Kemal, who, in the early seventies was already calling for the unity of Islam. Pan-Islam had the advantage, already seen in some of Jamal ad-

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<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114, 123.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129-130.

Din's teachings, of appealing both to traditional and new needs...the contradiction between pan-Islam and local nationalisms which were eventually to smother the former did not appear significant until the early twentieth century.”<sup>186</sup>

The important point that Keddie is making here is that Afghani's previous thought already appealed to both the old and the new (the current threat of European colonialism) needs of Islam. Hence, the nature of Afghani's ideology essentially is the nature of pan-Islam. In a letter most likely from 1877-1878 to an un-named Ottoman governmental official, Afghani revealed “...when I considered the condition of the Islamic nation it rent the shirt of my patience and I was overcome by fearful thoughts and visions from every side.”<sup>187</sup> Afghani went on to relate that one particularly attractive means of achieving this reform, besides education, was through the use of holy war.<sup>188</sup> An appeal to incite Muslims to holy war by a charismatic leader (presumably himself based upon his talk that led to expulsion from Istanbul) was, Afghani believed, a guaranteed method to stem the encroachment of Europe into Muslim lands. Afghani regarded holy war as a way to foster unity among all Muslims, as in holy war he saw messianic overtones that provided a strong catalyst for “rousing the worlds Muslims to action and re-creating a strong Islamic state.”<sup>189</sup>

Keddie believes that Afghani's adaptation to Ottoman ideas of pan-Islam was a logical progression in his own mind. His primary goal of unifying all Muslims to rid the Middle East and the Ottoman Empire of any Western colonialist actions was viable and attainable, or so he thought, by pan-Islam. As Keddie states, “he was re-asserting the importance of political power in Islam, like nationalists elsewhere, stating independence

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<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130-131.

<sup>187</sup> Al-Afghani, Jamal al-Din. Untitled letter from Afghani's personal papers left in Tehran in 1891. From Keddie: *Ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

was a pre-requisite to reform.”<sup>190</sup> Hence, religious reform for Afghani was purely instrumental – he saw it as being important to subsequent European progress and power. Yet, such a reform was needed for the Islamic world to achieve similar goals. In roughly 1878 while still in Egypt, Afghani amended his ideology to incorporate a more universal tone. His thought now encompassed all nations (or wherever Muslims resided) regarding his ideas of reform, whereas he had previously implied that his reforms were meant only for the country where he happened to dwell. He wanted an Islamic state, and for that matter an Islamic world, that would be able to defeat foreigners, emulate Western progress, and carry out religious and political reforms. He saw these as goals that should unite Muslims, wherever they may be. The rise of pan-Islamic ideology, primarily out of the Ottoman Empire, offered Afghani the chance to “fill a more important role than that of the power behind the ruler of a single Muslim country.”<sup>191</sup> In his ever-present quest to be associated with political power, pan-Islam now offered to place Afghani in the driver’s seat, rather than always directing those who already were. This put him in a position to try and appeal ideologically to Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II after his expulsion from Egypt, and perhaps to try to be invited back to Istanbul.

But this was not to happen. In the aftermath of his expulsion from Egypt, Afghani went to India from late 1879 until late 1882. Perhaps the most important aspect of Afghani’s stay in India was his writing. From late 1880 until he left, he published eight articles/speeches plus one book, most of which had the same anti-Western tone.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140-141. As far as this research can indicate, there were no ‘versions’ of pan-Islam such as Ottoman or Iranian, etc. The idea of pan-Islam, defined as unity of/among all Muslims, seems to be universal no matter the geographic region one looks at.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150. Interestingly, and adding to the complexities and contradictions about the man, although staunchly anti-Western Afghani was not averse to using Western modes of thought to bolster Islamic ones.

His writing mirrored the situation he found in India: the Muslim community there was faced with many challenges, such as the elimination of Muslims from governmental and army positions, and agricultural workers being replaced as the fortunes of their landlords evaporated. There were also lingering grievances stemming from the Indian Mutiny of 1857.<sup>193</sup> Despite the fact of Afghani's prolific writing, Keddie interestingly notes that there is little to no pan-Islamic rhetoric in his Indian articles. Rather, there is much in the way of local nationalistic ideas, some of which even clash with notions of pan-Islam. But Keddie seems here to be ignoring her own earlier conclusion that Afghani seemed to combine pan-Islam, nationalism, anti-Britishness/Western-ness, etc. into one, and that for Afghani, one was not necessarily distinguishable from the other.

The clearest evidence, however, for Afghani espousing a pan-Islamic platform comes from the propaganda he produced while in Paris from 1883 to 1884. Afghani came to Paris shortly after the British defeat of the Urabi movement in Egypt, and the start of Britain's 'temporary' occupation of Egypt. Over this issue, Afghani found considerable European hostility towards Britain, particularly in France, thus prompting his journey.<sup>194</sup> Continuing his nomadic lifestyle, Afghani once again traveled to a country where people would be amenable to his thought, and where he could hopefully influence policy. Much like his time in India, his most notable activity while in Paris was his writing and publishing. In order to understand the significance of these publications, it is necessary to understand the context in which they emerged. Before coming to Paris, Afghani made a brief visit, rather ironically, to London in early January 1883. There he wrote two noteworthy articles in Louis Sabunji's newspaper *an-Nahla* that criticized

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<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.

British policy in Egypt and British knowledge that the Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid “had been striving with success to have all Muslims adhere to the firm bond of the caliphate. The British feared for their rule over Indian Muslims, and awaited the right occasion to tear apart the Islamic solidarity that Europeans call ‘pan-Islam.’”<sup>195</sup> These articles are extremely important, as they are the first instance in which Afghani embraces pan-Islam by name. As such, it was and is no longer necessary to disguise the pan-Islamic elements of his previous thought under another guise or classification.

In London’s *al-Basir* newspaper, an 8 February 1883 article written by Afghani asked that the Ottoman government not be criticized. If the Ottoman government were overthrown, he argued, and each of its composite ethnicities were to either seek or achieve independence, they would become targets for foreigners to take over.<sup>196</sup> By this time, Sultan Abdulhamid II began to use Islam “as a lever which would instill some consciousness of a collective goal into his subjects.”<sup>197</sup> It was hoped by Afghani and the Sultan that all Ottoman Muslims would rally together to strengthen their government. Keddie argues that when forced to choose between ‘reform’ or the self-strengthening of the Islamic world, Afghani chose the latter. She writes that:

“In his turn toward pan-Islam and support for the Sultan, Afghani was following a path also traversed by other Muslim reformers and nationalists of the nineteenth century to whom unity and independence of the Muslim world came to appear as the primary goal. To many Muslim reformers outside Ottoman territory, unity behind the Sultan came to seem the best defense against the encroaching West.”<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184. The articles Keddie uses are: Al-Afghani, Jamal al-Din. *English Policy in Eastern Countries and The Reasons for the War in Egypt* from *an-Nahla*, London, V, 3, 1882-1883.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>197</sup> Mardin, Serif. *Religion and Secularism in Turkey* from Hourani, A. (ed.) *The Modern Middle East*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2004 (new edition), p. 356.

<sup>198</sup> Keddie, Nikki. *Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani: A Political Biography*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1972, p. 186.

During Afghani's time in Paris, two events stand out above others for which he is best known. The first is his *Answer to Renan*, an 18 May 1883 newspaper article which was written in reply to Ernst Renan's lecture on 'Islam and Science' at the Sorbonne and which Renan published on 29 March 1883 in the Journal des Debats.<sup>199</sup> Afghani's *Answer to Renan* was fascinating in that it was highly indicative of his religious unorthodoxy.<sup>200</sup> It also seemed to be an example of how Afghani believed that traditional religion should be used as a tool to keep the masses moral and obedient.<sup>201</sup> This was a prominent reflection of Afghani's medieval Islamic philosophical influences. As Keddie states, "it was Afghani's genius to be able to adapt Islam to radically new needs and conditions and to introduce modern ideas without renouncing or breaking with those with a more traditional outlook."<sup>202</sup> In many regards, Keddie is correct in calling Afghani a 'genius.' He was able to reach out to the greater Muslim community in the Middle East and Central Asia and recognize their need to adapt Islam to the changing circumstances around them. Yet he was able to achieve this without wholly severing them from baseline Islam. In doing so, he presented the possibility of enabling all Muslims to unify around Islam, which served as a, and *the*, common bond between them. In a very real and practical sense, this is now the re-defined nature of pan-Islam. In these circumstances, the pan-Islamic nature of Afghani's earlier thought is now able to reveal itself, albeit in its nascent form.

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<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>200</sup> Al-Afghani, Jamal al-Din. *Answer to Renan*. Journal des Debats, 18 May 1883. From: Keddie, Nikki R. An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din "al-Afghani." Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968, p. 181-187.

<sup>201</sup> Keddie, Nikki. Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani: A Political Biography. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1972, p. 193-194.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193-194.

The second event for which Afghani became known while in Paris was the creation of the newspaper *al-Urwa al-Wuthqa* with his Egyptian disciple Muhammad Abduh. This newspaper was launched in 1884 in Paris, but had free distribution throughout the Middle East and Central Asia.<sup>203</sup> Though only eighteen issues were published between March and October of 1884, *al-Urwa al-Wuthqa* reflected a growing pan-Islamic mood within the larger Muslim psyche. Central issues in articles were: hostility to British imperialism, advocacy of Islamic unity, and the interpretation of Islamic principles to reflect their contemporary applicability.<sup>204</sup> Writing to an international Muslim audience in his article *Nationality and the Muslim Religion*, Afghani stated that Muslims have gone beyond the limited capacity of tribalism, which considered nationality crucial. The more apt way to unite and strengthen the bonds of this unity was under the banner of their shared religion.<sup>205</sup> This theme was continued in other articles that Afghani authored, including *The Causes of the Decadence and the Inertia of the Muslims*, and *Islamic Unity*. In these writings, “the greed and rivalry of the Muslim princes and rulers is blamed for the breakup of Islamic unity, which should be restored.”<sup>206</sup> Finally, in his article *Fanaticism*, Afghani again emphasized his belief in the use of religion as the most powerful tool available to combat Western encroachment.

In reflecting upon this stage of Afghani’s life, Keddie makes an understated but extremely important observation. She notes that while modern nationalism and patriotism were nascent forces in the East, Islamic identification was quite strong.<sup>207</sup> The idea of fighting for ones country was not something that many Muslims in the Middle

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<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 214.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223.

East at that time would have unified under; that is more of a modern Western oriented notion. It must be remembered that until essentially post WWI and WWII, the Middle East as it is today did not exist. The modern partitioning of land into regions with definable borders on a map was essentially a foreign idea to Middle Easterners, as they were traditionally nomads. A line on imaginary map meant little or nothing to them, hence to think that they would rally behind such a notion as ‘the state’ to ward off foreigners at that time is un-realistic. What was available to them as a unifying factor, however, was their common religion. To unite over God, rather than the nation, is a concept that is much more easily conceivable. For all his faults and previous ideological inconsistencies, Afghani seemed to recognize this.

Afghani, though, also had the ability to recognize that ideological unity was only the first step in ridding the region of Western intruders. While it was religious unity that would hold Muslims together ideologically, there was a need for an additional component to physically remove the Europeans from Muslim lands. For Afghani, this element was holy war. Drawing upon such late Thirteenth-early Fourteenth Century philosophers as Ibn Tayymiah, Afghani sought a return to early Islam’s activism, unity, and military strength. He saw protection of Muslim territory through military strength as one of the primary principles of the Islamic faith.<sup>208</sup> The ulema had, in his opinion (which subsequently reflected the influence that the Tanzimat had upon him), deviated from this principle. In doing so, it caused the decline of Islamic civilization, i.e. in India and Egypt. The selfishness of the individual Muslim rulers had corrupted Muslim’s previous unity. Through a re-unification, Afghani sought to bolster Muslims while simultaneously

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<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224-225.

“warding off the non-Muslim imperialist threat.”<sup>209</sup> This was to be a common thread that continued among Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad.

### The Complexity of Afghani

Certainly Afghani was a colorful, eccentric, yet passionate character during his lifetime. The problem that one encounters, which all source authors seem to agree upon, is that his posthumous depiction seems to far overshadow what he was actually like while alive. Interestingly, this begs a question regarding historical memory. Much of what was initially known about Afghani, and what attributed to his vaulted status, was written by those who were closest to him, be it his nephew Lutfallah or his disciples, namely Muhammad Abduh. Is Afghani depicted in this way because that is how his disciples wanted him to appear, in some way validating their own lives by following such a man? Or did they actually see him as they depicted him, therefore having such passion for/about Afghani that they felt compelled to preserve him in the chronicles of history?

Such a question remains open. Yet through research and introspection, certain sentiments can be attributed to Afghani that have seemingly created a more accurate picture of him, even though they come long after his death. Literary critic Louis ‘Awad in the Spring of 1983 wrote a study on Afghani in the Arab magazine *at-Tadamon*, in which he spoke of Afghani as the “Socrates of Islam.” ‘Awad stated that “he wrote little and spoke much and created a legend around himself that was further elaborated by his disciples. In the course of time Afghani has become such a revered figure that he is

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<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224-225.

beyond criticism – indeed beyond research – in Egypt.”<sup>210</sup> To understand the real Afghani, therefore, one must decipher the idealized rhetoric and historical accounts created to illuminate him. However, ‘Awad and author Rudi Matthee do make a good point in that to uncover the historical Afghani, there is much at stake. Afghani is a critical figure in Middle Eastern history in the sense that if he is de-mythologized, historians run the potential risk of then undermining pan-Islam as a powerful and viable force in Islamic history. Matthee notes the chain effect that then becomes possible when he writes, “This, in turn, would undermine the solidity of the Muslim tradition that undergirds the contemporary call for Muslim authenticity.”<sup>211</sup>

Part of the trouble in attempting to understand Afghani is the times in which he lived. This period was the infancy of the European colonial effort in the Middle East, and as is such with any new movement, Muslim Middle Easterners were initially generally unsure of what to make of it. As a radical Islamic activist, Afghani seems to be well ahead of his time in his disdain for European, particularly British, involvement in the Middle East and Central Asian Muslim lands. As more was continually stripped away from what indigenous Muslims, in all their various lands, knew as normative at the hands of European colonialism, the question became grossly apparent: what is left to rely upon? Afghani would eventually answer this question with a one word answer that all Muslims would understand: Islam. This research argued that in doing so, he laid part of the groundwork for the ideational challenge that Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad would later face. These thinkers would, in part, expand the issue to ask what has the West stripped away in the encounter with Islam and Muslims? Their answer was also to be one word:

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<sup>210</sup> Matthee, Rudi *Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and the Egyptian National Debate* from the International Journal of Middle East Studies, Vol. 21, 1989 p. 151-169.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

God. In terms of a political solution this problem, this research argues that these thinkers would offer the same answer as Afghani: Islam.

As author Serif Mardin notes, this notion began evolving throughout the 1860's, which makes Afghani a late arrival at first glance. But as Keddie remarks in her works, if Afghani's early thought is scrutinized carefully before he became known as a pan-Islamic activist, one can see the elements of pan-Islam present, though it might not be called that yet *per se*. As a first step in the movement towards trying to achieve a Muslim solidarity, Afghani tried in India to rally all Muslims around a common language, but it was Islam that held a much stronger appeal for a much wider audience of Muslims as time evolved. Mardin writes "every society was kept from disintegrating by the strength of its moral fibre; what kept moral fibre strong was a society's culture. Islam was the culture of the Ottoman Empire and Ottomans only neglected this culture at their peril." [SIC.]<sup>212</sup> This melds perfectly with Afghani's criticism of the ulema, as they were supposed to be the leaders of the Muslim community, no matter the nation or state in which the Muslim resided. And perhaps more importantly in terms of Afghani, this statement nicely equates how Islam *is* the moral fiber of/for Muslims.

As the Muslim moral fiber *par excellence*, Afghani argued that Islam was not a static force. Yes, he did call for a return to the Islam of Muhammad's time, but only as a base upon which to build for the current and future challenges that Islam would face. The present status of Islam for Afghani was one of disarray – the ulema had been susceptible to corruption as had Muslim rulers of state. This filtered down to the realm of ordinary Muslims, who followed suit. Despite this laxity, for which Ottoman

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<sup>212</sup> Mardin, Serif. *Religion and Secularism in Turkey* from Hourani, A. (ed.) The Modern Middle East. London: I.B. Tauris, 2004 (new edition) p. 354.

intellectuals “admitted that in their day Islam was in a deplorable state,” there was something still vibrant and appealing about Islam.<sup>213</sup> That something was a notion that both Ottoman intellectuals and later Afghani picked up on. Author C. Ernst Dawn writes that:

“true Islam...was not incompatible with advanced civilization like that of Europe. The Muslims were in such a sad condition because true primitive Islam had been corrupted and, as a result, the Muslims had not been able to continue the remarkable progress of their early years. The remedy was simply to restore Islam to its pristine purity so that the Muslims, by adopting and adapting the necessary elements of modern civilization, might regain their former greatness.”<sup>214</sup>

Given the discussion of the historical Afghani and pan-Islam, the debate about his nationality and religious orthodoxy are to a certain extent a moot point. Was he a religious reformer? Possibly in his own mind. But Keddie and others feel that is the wrong way to interpret Afghani. The most important thing to realize is that he was, above all else, a Muslim; a Muslim who wanted to strengthen his international community.

Both Keddie and historian Ellie Kedourie make convincing arguments that Afghani was, in fact, a genuine advocate of pan-Islam. In comparison between the two historians, Kedourie’s work here is commendable, but is more a shorter version of Keddie’s *Afghani: A Political Biography*. Keddie’s work seems more thorough, certainly more historiographical, and though complex, makes a better argument for Afghani being an advocate of pan-Islam rather than a subverter of Islam. Kedourie’s argument takes that latter approach, painting Afghani as a subverter. One could deduce this argument in Keddie’s work, but upon closer introspection Keddie convincingly depicts this

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<sup>213</sup> Dawn, C. Ernst. *From Ottomanism to Arabism: The Origin of an Ideology* from Hourani, A. (ed.) *The Modern Middle East*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2004 (new edition), p. 380.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 380.

‘subversion’ as part of the complexity of Afghani’s pan-Islamic thought. In other words, Afghani doesn’t really subvert Islam *per se*, but rather uses it as a malleable entity so as to fit his own political agenda which falls under the general guise of pan-Islam.

As Keddie states, there is somewhat of a logical progression towards pan-Islam in Afghani’s thought when viewed in this way. The issue is that his thought is complex and disparate, and parts of it were not used depending upon the audience whom he was addressing. This does not ultimately aid in the categorization of Afghani’s ideology into a definable heading. However, as history unraveled itself in the Middle East during Afghani’s lifetime, all of the component elements in Afghani’s thought, no matter how incongruent, emerge most strongly and convincingly when he does in fact advocate for the unity of all Muslims through their shared religion.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Afghani is important to this research because he is the historical context of this research for the development of modern Islamic political thought in relation to the West. Though he was active prior to the mid-twentieth century, Afghani provides the initial tangible foundation from which modern Islamic political thought in relation to the West would germinate through the figures of Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad in the mid-twentieth century.

Islam for Afghani was to be the cohesive element that brought all Muslims, regardless of geographical location, nationality, or denomination together. This idea would ultimately comprise the notion of pan-Islam, and was designed by Afghani to be a bulwark against the West and Westernization of Muslim lands and, more importantly for

this research, Muslim civil society and its moral economy. Hence the significance of Afghani and the reason for his inclusion in the historical context section of this research is that he began to appreciate that unity around a common factor to all Muslims should be the basis for resistance against the West. This research argued that when viewed in this light, even Afghani's earliest thought was a nascent pan-Islam. Through its development, he then laid the groundwork for solidarity, to employ the Gramscian term, for the Ummah to use as the beginning steps toward the enactment of change in Islamic civil society.

Afghani's pan-Islam can also be seen as a call for re-orientation toward God. By focusing on solidarity, it became incumbent upon Muslims to ask what, in fact, was this solidarity based upon. Introspection in this manner would lead to the answer: Islam, but perhaps more importantly for this research, God in the/an Islamic perspective. Hence a call for unity among Muslims is also a call for unity in and around God. Interestingly, this has implications for the Islamic moral economy as well. Unity and focus upon God is a call to follow, as the Quran in Sura 1:5 states, the straight path, the living of a God-centered just and moral life.

Though Afghani is historically viewed as an enigmatic character, his importance in the historical context of this research is clear. His experiences through his travels brought him into contact with the West and Westernization. Through this encounter with the West, he witnessed the beginning of the Ummah's struggle to retain its Islamic mores of civil society and moral economy. As his encounter continued, its circumstances struck a nerve and drew his ire. Afghani's solution to this untenable situation was to create resistance to the West and Westernization through Muslim solidarity. As there was now a need for a theoretical and tangible basis for fending off the encroachment of the West,

pan-Islam was to be his vehicle for the acquisition of that solidarity. Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad as his intellectual successors would take Afghani's pan-Islam and sharpen its focus.

## **Chapter 3**

### **“The Scion of Night”: Sayyid Qutb and the Development of Islamic Political Thought in Relation to the West<sup>215</sup>**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will focus on the development of Sayyid Qutb's Islamic political thought in relation to the West, particularly the US. This thought contains much in the way of anti-Western rhetoric. This research contends that his experience while in the West, the US in particular, was the most critical in his life in terms of the development of this line of thought. This chapter argues that Qutb, in response to aspects of the orientalism discourse (later articulated by Said), used the ideas of the Western intellectuals Marx, Engels, Foucault, and Gramsci in his own writings and ideas as an aid to criticize the West. He also used these ideas in his own thought as a method for enacting change in Islamic civil society. This research also argues in this chapter that Qutb displayed aspects of Nietzsche's thought (that when an entity encounters the West, God is lost) in his writings. Qutb believed that this aspect was tied in with Westernization (colonialism, materialism, and secularism) as he saw it, and believed it was eroding Islamic civil society and the Islamic moral economy, both in Egypt and in the greater Ummah. Finally, this research argues in this chapter that Qutb wanted to counter the loss of God in Islamic civil society and reverse the influence of Westernization through

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<sup>215</sup> Qutb, Sayyid. A Child From the Village Calvert, John and Shepherd, William ed. and trans. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2004 p. 97-98. Qutb relates that the “scions of night” refers to gypsies who were assassins, “as the nastiest of the thieves were called. These do not refrain from murder, but rather treat it as a game they play during their numerous adventures.”

political means. Qutb wished to institute the Quran as law, and in doing so permanently restore God to Islamic civil society and the Islamic moral economy.

While in the US, and shortly after his return to Egypt, Qutb wrote the bulk of his anti-Western rhetoric. It is this rhetoric for which he was most infamous in the years up to and following his death in 1966 at the hands of Nasser's government in Egypt. In order to gain a perspective on the development of Qutb's Islamic political thought, it is important to understand where that rhetoric began to germinate. Though the nucleus of his thought was developed in the US, it did not develop in a vacuum. Therefore it is necessary to include a brief history of Qutb's life up until his departure for the US, and offer an initial explanation of the road he chose to travel throughout the later part of his life.

### Early Life

Sayyid Qutb was born as Sayyid Qutb Ibrahim Hussayn Shadhili in 1906 in the rural Egyptian village of Musha in the Asyut district approximately 235 miles south of Cairo.<sup>216</sup> (See Map 1) Sayyid's father, Qutb Ibrahim, was a notable farmer in Musha, who had come from a family of high circumstance. By the time of Sayyid Qutb's birth, however, the family had fallen upon hard times financially. As a result, they were forced to sell off many valuable pieces of land in order to pay off the debts Qutb Ibrahim had accumulated due to the family's previous lavish lifestyle. Sayyid Qutb himself would not become aware of this until later on in his childhood. Despite these hardships during Sayyid Qutb's early upbringing, his father remained active in the Egyptian political scene. He was a lively member of the local chapter of the Nationalist Party, the Hizb al-

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<sup>216</sup> Musallam, Adnan A. From Secularism to Jihad: Sayyid Qutb and the Foundations of Radical Islamism. London: Praeger, 2005 p. 29.

Watani. Previously during World War I, Qutb's father used the family home as a place for the party's local meetings. This political activity would leave a deep and lasting impression on Sayyid Qutb, according to historian Adnan Musallam.<sup>217</sup>

Sayyid Qutb's mother, Fatimah, was also from a prominent family in the same village, whose fortunes were similarly declining. Musallam notes that until her death in 1940, she was an immeasurable influence upon her children: Hamidah, Aminah, Muhammad, and Sayyid. She gave to him "a sense of mission in life" despite the family's hardships.<sup>218</sup> As part of this mission, she wanted the best education for Sayyid that could possibly be obtained and wanted to instill in him the values of the Quran.

Much of what has been passed on about Qutb's childhood comes from his autobiography, A Child From the Village, in which he depicts his life growing up in rural Egypt. Although there are many obvious biases that arise when using an autobiography of this sort, it is nonetheless the most useful tool to date in determining the shape of the man Sayyid Qutb would become. His writings about his family point to an interesting notion in his political writings; he relates that his family, though having fallen on hard times economically, were disposed to 'keeping up appearances' within his village and among the family's relatives and friends. Though he does not explicitly indicate so, his parents' outlook did not make the transition to his political and polemical writings at all. Rather, what one finds in these writings is a searing and brutally honest account of what he feels is the situation around him regarding the current state of Islam and the West. He is trying to tell the truth as he sees it, rather than shrouding it in disguise for the sake of propriety and thereby deceiving his fellow Muslims. Stylistically, it is interesting to note

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<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

that Qutb refers to himself in the third person throughout this work. Be that as it may, he relates that,

“The child grew up in a family that did not have great wealth, but did have prestige. It had once possessed great wealth, but this had been divided up and diminished by the process of inheritance. His father still had a reasonable portion, but it was never enough. He had become the head of the family and as such was obliged to keep up its name and position, even though with his limited share of the inheritance he could hardly afford what the family wealth as a whole had previously allowed. In the countryside, however, he dared not be seen to fail to keep up all his obligations. He was, furthermore, lavish in his hospitality and that increased the burden on his wealth. But to the last moment he kept up all appearances and met all expectations.”<sup>219</sup>

Of his mother he relates, “His mother’s family was equally old and respected, or more so. Exactly the same thing had happened to her family as to his, but its standing was increased by the fact that two of her brothers had been sent to the Azhar in Cairo [sic] as usually happened with the boys from wealthy rural families, and this gave the family a kind of scholarly stature alongside its regular rural prestige.”<sup>220</sup> This family history had a deep and profound effect on who Qutb thought he should be from a very early age. He writes, “This was the environment the boy grew up in, and everything around him made him feel as if he belonged in some place other than the village.”<sup>221</sup> When he turned six years old, his family determined that it was the appropriate time to begin his education. This, however, posed a problem. There were those in his family who believed that he should be educated in the *Kuttab*, a type of religiously-oriented school where he would memorize the Quran and obtain a *Baraka* or degree that recognizes this ability. Others wanted him to go to the state-sponsored primary school, which among other things was more academically progressive and secular, though the Quran was also taught there. Qutb relates that he did not appreciate that this debate over his educational future was even

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<sup>219</sup> Qutb, Sayyid. A Child From the Village Calvert, John and Shepherd, William ed. and trans. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2004 p. 7.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

taking place. “He was informed of the decision and agreed, but without any evident enthusiasm, for he would rather have stayed at home playing with his sister, who was a little older than he, or playing in the street with the other children his age...All this had a decisive effect on his attitude toward the school, because the school was the cause of all this special treatment.”<sup>222</sup>

As previously mentioned, Qutb’s mother had tremendous expectations for him. As the village Qutb lived in was very progressive for southern Egypt regarding education, Qutb’s mother believed that her son’s future success depended entirely on how he performed academically in primary school.<sup>223</sup> This would be the springboard for his opportunity to go to Cairo and complete his education.<sup>224</sup> After much deliberation, Qutb’s father proclaimed that his son would attend the *Kuttab*. But Qutb, after realizing the disdain he felt for the *Kuttab* due in part to its unsanitary conditions, made his own way back to the state school and avoided the issue of the Quran not being taught in the school by memorizing it himself.<sup>225</sup> He completed his studies at the school by the time he was age ten.

As Qutb grew up in his village, he relates that a myriad of “images, myths, and accounts were constantly being impressed upon his young mind...It took an actual incident, or a number of such, to demolish these beliefs and to establish new ones in their place.”<sup>226</sup> The important notion here for the purposes of this research are the circumstances under which these beliefs emerged, took place, and changed. This is an important component for all of the case studies of individuals that this research examines.

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<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11, 15.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

His education fell into this category. In fact, Qutb writes that “Our friend was famous among the cultured people of the village for his books and reading habits. He was respected in their eyes and they predicted a glorious future for him... Therefore, his library was protected and grew and grew until it eventually contained twenty-five books. In fact, he was passionately fond of this library, which was unique in the village by virtue of its diverse contents.”<sup>227</sup> It is clearly obvious, at least from Qutb’s point of view, that he was developing into a special young man, as it was “his library that earned him, at his young age, great fame and celebrity in the village.”<sup>228</sup> Despite his own biases, the fact that he amassed such a collection of books in a rural village does indicate that he was in fact, a unique young individual.

As somewhat of an important side note, Qutb relates that as he pursued his education further in the village towards the end of World War I, men who were politically active began meeting in the Qutb family house. Qutb’s father at this time was a committee member of the Nationalist Party, and a reader of the party newspaper. This is indicative of those types of people who would later be referred to as Islamists: literate, educated, and politically active. It is also interesting to note that Qutb writes, “The feelings of the entire village were on the side of Turkey, the State of the Islamic Caliphate, and against the Allies, who represented the ‘unbelievers’ and were fighting Islam. It seemed that certain feelings were beginning to ferment. He remembers that now, and realizes that even though he was a child he, like the men, had the feeling that some as yet ill-defined thing was going to happen. He did not know what it was or how it would

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<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

occur, but that it would definitely happen.”<sup>229</sup> He later went on to acquire “two valuable and rare books containing patriotic material for the mind that his soul thirsted for.”<sup>230</sup> This instance appears to be the earliest sign of Qutb’s anti-Western feelings. By self-description, these sentiments were instilled in him at a young age, and were still present at the time of his autobiography’s publication in 1946. This is extremely important because this was a full two years before Qutb went to the US, and a full five years before one of his most anti-Western works was published in 1951.

What seemed to precipitate Qutb’s leaving the village at the age of sixteen was the fact that his father had to sell off a piece of land in order that the family might gain some money. Qutb’s mother took this news especially hard, postulating that this might be the first of many sales of family possessions to the degree that the family will be left with nothing. So upsetting was this to her that she told Qutb, “Listen, sir, you must get back what your father has lost!”<sup>231</sup> It was then settled that Qutb would go to Cairo and live with his maternal uncle, who was a journalist and a teacher. Qutb wrote, “When his mother depicted the fate that awaited his father’s house if things continued as they were going, he could see the yawning abyss. Thus the first seed of real responsibility was sown [sic] into his soul. He knew now why his mother was pushing his education so fast and why she had been so eager for him to go to the primary school rather than the *kuttab*. He had to repair the building before it collapsed.”<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

The Literary Critic and the Egyptian Ministry of Education

With this mantra ingrained upon his mind by his mother, Qutb left for Cairo in roughly 1921. While in Cairo, Qutb lived with his maternal uncle Ahmad Hussayn 'Uthman for four years in a suburb called Zaytun. Qutb enrolled in the preliminary teachers training school, Madrasat al-Mu'allimin al-Awwaliyah, graduating in 1928, and went on to attend the preparatory high school Dar ul-Ulum. In 1929, he graduated and entered college, finishing in 1933. During this time, Qutb proved to be an excellent student, writing poetry and literary compositions that appeared in numerous Cairo journals. Interestingly, on January 16, 1925, Qutb published a poem in al-Balagh which was critical of British policies in Egypt, and supported the Egyptian leader Sa'd Zaghlul. Simultaneously, Qutb became acquainted with a Wafdist journalist and leader of the Diwan, a new modern poetry school. Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad had an enormous influence on Qutb's poetry and literary criticism essays, so much so that Qutb became an active member of the Wafd party, of which al-Balagh was its main publication.<sup>233</sup> Interestingly, Musallam relates that for Qutb, poetry was one of the arts that "serves as an intermediary between what is and what ought to be, and which draws us closer to the 'highest ideal'...the poet has to have a more precise and deeper feeling for life than that shared by the masses, but one which does not disrupt his links with them."<sup>234</sup> This sentiment is of great importance. Qutb would transform and magnify this in his prose writings after his return from the US.

Qutb graduated in 1933 with a BA in Arabic language and literature, and a diploma in education. He then went to work for the Egyptian government. Qutb taught

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<sup>233</sup> Musallam, Adnan A. From Secularism to Jihad: Sayyid Qutb and the Foundations of Radical Islamism. London: Praeger, 2005 p. 35.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

Arabic at al-Da'udiyyah Prep School from 1933-1935, Dumyat in 1935, Bani Sweif from 1935-1936, and Halwan from 1936 -1940. From here, Qutb was transferred to the Egyptian Ministry of Education, working on the supervision of general education and the administration of translation and statistics from 1940-1944. He was promoted to work as an inspector of elementary education in 1944 and then in the Directorate General of Culture from 1945-1948.<sup>235</sup> Though it is outside the scope of this research, Qutb's writings during this period were characterized by a search for the ideal world, where ethics and moral character were paramount. Some of the circumstances by which these characteristics developed were Qutb's renewed and increased interest in the Quran (despite an earlier lapse), the death of his mother in 1940, health issues, and a love affair gone wrong.<sup>236</sup>

The year 1947 was a turning point for Qutb. It was then that strong religious ideas and symbolism began to appear in his literary criticism and poetry. The critical aspect of this turning point is that Qutb began to connect to the past; he thought that political revolution could not be sustained unless it was supplemented and amplified by the spiritual leadership similar to that of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani. A leader of this caliber would direct the people's ways of thinking from the finite to the infinite and eternal.<sup>237</sup>

It is interesting to note that Qutb's time in Cairo after his education coincided with World War II. Musallam makes the valid point that the shift in Qutb's attitudes should be seen against the backdrop of "the ravaging impact of World War II upon

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<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57-69. Musallam notes that during the 1920's and 1930's in Cairo, Qutb led a very secular life, where the Quran of his childhood was challenged greatly by commentaries read while at the various schools and in various literary circles. This fostered a lapse in his faith and an extreme doubt in his belief in Islam.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71. [From Qutb, Sayyid Ar-Risalah # 705 16 Jan 1947 P. 28-29]

Egyptian society resulting from the large presence of foreign troops on Egyptian soil...The effects of World War II fostered an atmosphere in Egyptian society that was seen by many, including Qutb, as contributing to the decay of public morality and institutions.<sup>238</sup> While this may not be the sole reason for the initial shift of Qutb's thought and attitudes, it is certainly a viable possibility. Musallam notes more correctly that the build-up to Qutb's critical year of 1947 was fueled by: 1.) a criticism of Egypt's Muslim youth, for not adhering to the Quran and their general lack of interest in educational works. Qutb blamed the mass media (radio, film, and the press) for this; 2.) living most of his life squarely situated during and between the two World Wars, Qutb cautioned his fellow Muslims, beginning around 1933, then again in 1940 according to Musallam, against *taqlid* or blind imitation of the West.

### Social Justice in Islam

Qutb's work Social Justice in Islam was written prior to his departure for the US, and was in fact published in 1948 during his stay. The work covers an array of topics. What is selected here will only be those topics pertinent to this research. However, what is noticeable in comparison with his other works is that there is a palpable sense that Qutb is laying a foundation for future thought. By way of introduction, Qutb writes that, "The Islamic belief is that humanity is an essential unity; its scattered elements must be brought together, its diversity must give place to unity, its variety of creeds must in the end be brought into one."<sup>239</sup> Almost immediately, one can see that Qutb feels that Islam itself is fractured and in need of repair. But the question remained, how to go about such a task?

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<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>239</sup> Qutb, Sayyid. Social Justice in Islam New York: Islamic Publications International, 2000 p. 41.

The repair for Qutb needed to be, at least in this work, a philosophical one.

Before physical action could be taken, it was necessary to imprint ideologically upon the Ummah what must be done. In a tone very reminiscent of Marx, Qutb writes, “Literature, again, is the emotional interpretation of life. It issues from the same wellspring whence flow in any culture all the philosophies, the religious beliefs, the experiments, and the influences. Literature is the most important factor in the establishment of a moral philosophy of life and in the production of any specific influence on the human mind.”<sup>240</sup> This is an incredibly important passage for the purposes of this research. To have people understand the point of enacting change is invaluable when actually trying to enact that change. The simple act of writing down an idea is an assumption by the writer that the audience who will read that idea are in fact literate, and capable of abstract thought. By stating this, Qutb has validated the entirety of the ideational structure(s) set in motion by Marx, Engels, Foucault, and Gramsci. Simultaneously, he has provided evidence for the argument against aspects of orientalism. By making continuous use of, and validating, the ideas similar to those of the Western intellectuals Marx, Engels, Foucault, and Gramsci in all of his writings, Qutb would continue to make an anti-orientalist argument throughout the entirety of his anti-Western rhetoric.

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<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 293.

Continuing on in this line of thought redolent of Marx, Qutb writes that,

“History is a branch of literature; but one that has its own characteristics, and which therefore has also its own significance. For history is an interpretation of the events of life, which is necessarily influenced by a given philosophy and concept of life. Its interpretation of events may therefore lead to a philosophy of life that completely opposed to Islamic theory...Beyond this, historians, who are for the most part Europeans, have made the history of Europe the focal point of world history. In view of the nature of man, this is excusable, and we have borne it with patience as a characteristically Western and European delusion. Yet if our youth are to study history in this spirit and by this method, then they will finish with two false beliefs: 1. That spiritual factors have no influence on the course of events in time, or at least that any such influence is very weak. 2. That Europe is the mistress of historical events and that the influence of the East and of Islam is exiguous.”<sup>241</sup>

In this passage, Qutb has placed the blame for what he sees as the course of history, and certainly its interpretation, in a very real sense upon the West. Islam, to Qutb, has taken a secondary role in the telling of the historical narrative. This something that is clearly upsetting to him, and warns against the continuation of this trend as he sees it. For Qutb, mankind was in a state of confusion before the rise of Islam. However, Islam “gave a unity to all powers and abilities, it integrated all desires and inclinations and learnings, it gave a coherence to all men’s efforts. In all these Islam saw one embracing unity which took in the universe, the soul, and all human life. Its aim was to unite earth and heaven in one world; to join the present world and the world to come in one faith; to link the spirit and body in one humanity; to correlate worship and work in one’s life. It sought to bring all these into one path – the path which leads to Allah.”<sup>242</sup> With the reading of this passage, one can see the literary talent that Qutb was previously known for shining through. In many ways, this passage is an important justification for this research. As previously stated, for Qutb God could not be separated from any aspect of human life, particularly politics. It is Qutb’s intention to have all elements of human life on earth

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<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 294.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42-43.

mirror that of life in Heaven by instituting Islam as *the* political standard; by doing so, he advocates that everything from ethics to politics follow the words that God has given to Muhammad in the Quran. Islam, then, would be the form of government par excellence and therefore God could not be removed from human life in any form. He would later elaborate on this sentiment in Milestones, but the seeds of this line of thought are set down here to germinate. Author Albert J. Bergesen notes, “European secularity came at the expense of a transcendent religious foundation resulting in material well-being at the expense of a sense of a divine origin.”<sup>243</sup> In this regard, Qutb wants to push Islamic political thought, as part of that all-encompassing ethos of Islam, in a new direction for the twentieth century. Rather than languishing in what he sees as a stagnant and static state, Qutb believes the answer of how to guide mankind to God’s path lies within Islam. To conclude this line of thought, he writes, “Beyond all this, there does exist one eternal and unchanging power, which has no beginning and no end. To it belongs the government of the world, of mankind, and of life. It is the power of Allah.”<sup>244</sup>

Qutb enumerates this line of thinking even further later on in the work. The idea that Islam is an all-encompassing ethos is something that is clearly important to him. Again, following the ideas of Marx, Engels, Foucault, and Gramsci, Qutb is laying the philosophical groundwork for the changes in society that may be enacted later. Qutb believes that “The Islamic political system is based on two fundamental conceptions, both of which originate in its general idea of the universe, of life, and of man. One is the idea of the equality of mankind as a species, in nature and in origin; the other is the belief that Islam represents the eternal system for the world throughout the future of the human

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<sup>243</sup> Bergesen, Albert J. The Sayyid Qutb Reader New York: Routledge 2008, p. 18. It is also on this page where Bergesen offers an excellent explanation of “Qutbian political Islam.”

<sup>244</sup> Qutb, Sayyid. Social Justice in Islam New York: Islamic Publications International, 2000 p. 43.

race.”<sup>245</sup> In the vision he sees of the current world around him, Qutb’s own worldview is sorely lacking. He justifies his vision by stating that, “The Islamic political system...does not legislate for one race or for one generation, but for all races and for all generations.”<sup>246</sup> Indicating that he is planning to act upon his world-vision, he writes, “The important thing for the moment is to establish the fact that Islam is not a stagnant system and that its practical applications are to be found not merely in one stage of history, nor only in one quarter of the world.”<sup>247</sup> In this manner, it is interesting to note the Nietzschean connection that Qutb feels with the past here.

As previously mentioned, the current reality that Qutb sees in the world does not equate with his own world-vision. And he has labeled the reason for this incongruence: the West. As an area that demonstrates the core of this research, Qutb writes,

“So in every age, Islam wears an aspect of outstanding grandeur and high nobility, when it is contrasted with present day Western civilization and its practices in countries that misfortune brings into the toils of colonial administration. Such countries are denied the true prerogatives of Western civilization, such as education, commerce, and economic development, to the end that they may remain as long as possible in the role of milch cattle for the colonizing nations. In addition to this there is entailed the degradation of all human nobility, both individual and collective, the corruption of morals that arises from such evil intentions, the rivalries from party and sect whose seeds are sown and whose growth is encouraged, and all varieties theft, robbery, and plunder on the part of individuals, societies, and peoples.”<sup>248</sup>

This sentiment has even spilled over into the global Ummah drawing extreme ire from Qutb, as the venom of the West has infiltrated Islam, something that was supposed to be pure and act as a defense against such conflagrations. Bearing this in mind, he writes, “That Islamic society today is not Islamic in any sense of the word...We permit the extravagance and the luxury that Islam prohibits.”<sup>249</sup> Qutb further derides the West for

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<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 262.

its “idle aspersions that Westerners have cast on our faith.”<sup>250</sup> At this point, Qutb focuses more on Europe as ‘the West’ than he does the US. However, one must bear in mind that this was written prior to his US experience. For example, he states that, “Europe mustered all its forces to extinguish the spirit of Islam,” and “European Imperial interests can never forget that the spirit of Islam is like a rock blocking the spread of imperialism. This rock must either be destroyed or pushed aside.”<sup>251</sup> He goes on to claim that European imperialism has no choice but to be caustic towards Islam. He ends his argument by stating, “the modern conquest by Western civilization with its material and cultural weapons, which have turned some Muslims into instruments for breaking down and destroying Islam at the direction of the Imperialistic powers.”<sup>252</sup> Qutb, more than anything in this particular segment, seems to be increasingly upset at the fact that there were Muslims who allowed themselves to be influenced by Western mores to such a degree that Qutb no longer feels these people are worthy of being called Muslims. Of course, this is a subjective statement on behalf of Qutb. But the important point here is what he believes he sees in his own mind: it is not so much that Islam is the impure element in the equation, but rather those Muslims who followed Islam and who let themselves be lead astray from its purity. This, he believed, was cause for a schism, and a divergence of interests between Islam and the West. This prompts him to state, “It should be pointed out also that the world order today is in that state of insecurity and instability where it must look for new foundations and search for some spiritual means of restoring man to his faith in the principles of humanity.”<sup>253</sup> Islam, true Islam of the

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<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 262.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 270, 273.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 273, 274.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 278.

period of Muhammad and with the Rashidun as example Muslims par excellence, was the answer to this conundrum for Qutb.

Yet Europe was not the only target in Qutb's sights. The US was not far behind in his assignment of blame for the disintegration of Islamic life and Muslims worldwide. Qutb writes, "The nature of European and American philosophy does not differ essentially from that of Russian; both depend on the supremacy of a materialistic doctrine of life."<sup>254</sup> To combat these destructive forces, Qutb tried to rally support for his vision. He decried, "Our mission is to call for a renewal of Islamic life, a life governed by the spirit and the law of Islam, which alone can produce that form of Islam that we need today, and which is in conformity with the genuine Islamic tradition."<sup>255</sup> It is *that* Islam which would provide the link between God and government.

In Social Justice in Islam Qutb is offering a justification of Islam as *the* way of life for all peoples. In an all-encapsulating term, it is timeless. As such, Qutb is also trying to lay out all the particulars for Islam as a method of governance. In doing so, he offers Islam as a defense against the rising tide of the West and what he sees as its corruptible influences. This prompts him to make an incredibly important statement. He relates that Islam is not static; in other words, Islam has as he says "practical applications" in society regardless of what age one is living in historically. This notion serves him well, as the latter part of his work focuses on the idea that not only is the present state of the world in disarray, but Islam is in disarray as well. It is at this point that he begins his attacks upon the West, and interestingly and importantly, attacks upon Muslims as not adhering to true Islam. These two points are of immense importance, as

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<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 315.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 261.

they are intertwined. Qutb believed he saw the world suffering at the hands of the West, ethically, politically, etc. He thought he could turn to his fellow Muslims to rely upon their support to combat these forces. But he found, or believed he found, that the corruptive forces of the West had infiltrated the ranks of Islam, and had taken hold of the Ummah. This fueled his anger tremendously and inspired him into further ideological action. This ideological action resulted, among other things, in his work Milestones for which he was eventually executed in 1966 under Nasser.

### Qutb in America: 1948-1950

Perhaps most importantly for the purposes of this research, a schism developed during 1947 between the Ministry of Education and Qutb. Qutb, in agreement with critic and his contemporary Taha Hussayn, believed that the Ministry of Education “lacked consistent educational policies because of partisanship and internal power struggles and that the overhaul and decentralization of the department was therefore necessary.”<sup>256</sup> Given these feelings, and the fact that throughout the 1940’s Qutb’s literary work was revealing a nascent but increasing anti-Western tone, tensions flared especially among those in Egypt’s royal palace. The royal palace apparently became quite incensed with Qutb to the degree that his arrest was ordered. Luckily for Qutb, Egypt’s Prime Minister, Mahmoud Fahmi al-Nuqrashi, was a former colleague of Qutb’s in both the Wafd and Sa’dist political parties. He was able to intervene on Qutb’s behalf when the situation became inflamed. An order was issued to Qutb’s superiors in the Ministry of Education, wherein Qutb was given a scholarship by the Ministry on 3 November 1948 to study the fundamentals of educational curriculum in the US. He remained in the US until his

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<sup>256</sup> Musallam, Adnan A. From Secularism to Jihad: Sayyid Qutb and the Foundations of Radical Islamism. London: Praeger, 2005 p. 79.

return to Egypt on 23 August 1950.<sup>257</sup> What on face value looked like a golden opportunity to study American methods of education in reality was an adroit means of removing a political agitator from the midst of the Egyptian government and literary circles. By placing him in arguably the center of modern Western society, it was hoped by the Egyptian government that Qutb would return to Egypt sympathetic, or at least more sympathetic, to Western values and mores. This was sought especially given the backdrop of the post World War II world, not to mention the British (and therefore Western) influence upon Egypt. What actually happened, though, could not have been more different. The Ministry's plan backfired drastically. Qutb returned home in 1950 more of a radical than before he had left.

Qutb was slated to study the educational curricula of the US but there was in reality no stipulation that Qutb ever earn any university credits. It apparently was an open-structured scholarship.<sup>258</sup> However, in one of the most interesting and mysterious aspects of Sayyid Qutb's time in the US, he actually only enrolled at one university during his two year stay. Qutb was enrolled at the Colorado State College of Education which is now the University of Northern Colorado located in the town of Greeley, north of Denver (see Map 2). According to the university archivist Sayyid Qutb, under the name Sayed Kotb, audited graduate education classes in the summer of 1949 and the fall of 1949. He dropped out of the university on 21 December 1949, and never received a Masters degree.<sup>259</sup> Qutb was also reported to have been both a student and a teacher at

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<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43, 112.

<sup>258</sup> Calvert, John. 'The World Is an Undutiful Boy!': Sayyid Qutb's American Experience. From Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations. Volume 11, Issue 1, March 2000, p. 87-103.

<sup>259</sup> Email correspondence 27 November 2006 with Kay E. Lowell, Professor, University Libraries, Archival Services Librarian. James A. Michener Library, Campus Box 48, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley CO 80639.

the International Center for Teaching Languages in Washington D.C., which is now the University of the District of Columbia. According to the archivist at the University of the District of Columbia, Sayyid Qutb was neither a student nor a teacher there. They have no school information or papers that indicate he ever formally attended the institution.<sup>260</sup> As of the time of this research, correspondence has not been returned by Stanford University where Qutb was also thought to have taken classes. It appears that what Qutb did more than anything was observe his new surroundings, as he moved across the country.

#### Writings on America

Most of what is known about Qutb's time in the US comes from his writings upon his return to Egypt in 1950. More importantly for the purposes of this research, it is in these writings that there is developed an enormous anti-Western tone. The character that these writings take vastly overrides the tone of Qutb's initial anti-Western rhetoric. As a general statement, they are even harsher regarding Western social and cultural practices, particularly focusing on those of the US. It is these writings in particular that begin to illuminate the very Nietzschean idea that when an entity encounters 'the West', something is indeed lost during that encounter. For Qutb, his anti-Western writings and rhetoric indicate that he feels it is God that is lost in this encounter.

This notion, however, took time to develop. The first evidence of this came in the form of an article Qutb wrote for Fulcrum, the literary magazine of the Colorado State College of Education. The article is entitled *The World is an Undutiful Boy!* and is a story of Egypt, History, God and the World. His first line, which serves as a sub-title of

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<sup>260</sup> Email correspondence 19 December 2006 with John S. Page, Acting Dean, University of the District of Columbia, Learning Resources Division. 4200 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington D.C., 20008.

sorts, reveals Qutb's nationalistic feelings and also the fact that he is not pleased with the direction that history is moving. He states, "History, the wayward child, has forgotten the examples of mother Egypt."<sup>261</sup> The article is unique in that it is written in more of a story form, perhaps a result of Qutb's profession as a literary critic. Immediately two aspects are noticeable: Egypt and God. He begins by writing, "There was an ancient legend in Egypt. When the god [sic] of wisdom and knowledge created History, he gave him a great writing book and a big pen, and said to him: 'Go walking on this earth, and write notes about everything you see and hear.'"<sup>262</sup> Though the young History had questions, God answered all of them. Upon one of his journeys, History "saw a beautiful young woman who was a wise woman, too: she had a little boy whom she was teaching in a gentle manner."<sup>263</sup> History inquired of God who she was, and was given the reply "'She is Egypt,' his god [sic] answered. 'She is Egypt and that little boy is the world who is studying' – the god [sic] answered again."<sup>264</sup> In a dialogue with Egypt, History asks why it is that Egypt seems to have abundant knowledge. She replies to him that the Egyptians "were very advanced and possessed a great knowledge of civilization before any other country. Egypt was a civilized country when other peoples were living in forests. Egypt taught Greece, and Greece taught Europe."<sup>265</sup> When History inquires what happened to the little boy (the World) when he grew up, we find the heart of Qutb's article, and the frustration that is apparent between Qutb and the West. He writes, "When he grew up, he

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<sup>261</sup> Qutb, Sayyid (Koth, Sayed). *The World is an Undutiful Boy!* from Fulcrum: The Literary magazine of Colorado State College of Education. Fall 1949, Vol III, No. 1, p. 29.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

had thrown out his nurse, his kind nurse! He struck her, trying to kill her. I am sorry. This is not a figure of speech. This is a fact. That is what actually happened.”<sup>266</sup>

Clearly, Qutb is trying to illustrate that not only has the world fallen away from the teachings that Egypt has bestowed upon the world, (thereby demonstrating a bit of national pride) but more importantly that the world has fallen away from, and disobeyed, God. Qutb, before coming to the US found a renewed interest in the Quran, one that had been lacking somewhat during his education in Cairo. Perhaps this anecdote is somewhat of a self-description on one hand while on the other it is also a commentary on the direction he believed the West in particular, and to some degree Muslim youth, had gone and was currently headed. In other words, it was not the direction that God had intended.

In the last paragraph of the article, Qutb takes a very unexpected turn. As the article has thus far been anecdotal, Qutb abandons this line, and turns to the subject of modern politics. He writes, “When we came here to appeal to England for our rights, the world helped England against the justice. When we came here to appeal against the Jews, the world helped the Jews against the justice. During the war between Arab and Jews, the world helped the Jews too.”<sup>267</sup> The first sentence is meant to refer to the fact that Egypt was for so long under British colonial influence and rule. Justice appears to be referring to Egyptian freedom from that colonial rule, and the world, meaning the West, did little to help the Egyptians in their endeavor. The next sentence is meant to refer to the creation of the state of Israel by the West (Britain, and supported by the US). It is difficult to derive Qutb’s meaning – whether he is anti-Jewish or is angry over the taking of Arab land for the creation of the state of Israel. No matter which is the case, his anger

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<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

towards the West is abundant and clear. He reinforces this notion when he concludes the article with the phrase “Oh! What an undutiful world! What an undutiful boy!”<sup>268</sup>

Though highly metaphorical and anecdotal, this is the first instance of Qutb’s writing during his American experience where he articulates his feelings of outrage toward the West. Clearly, the boy as the world is meant to represent the West, and Qutb rationalizes the West’s behavior as a consequence of falling away from God, or putting God as secondary to its own interests. As a result of this, Qutb portrays a sense of the concordance and harmony or brotherhood of humanity breaking down, certainly through his own eyes.

*ar-Risalah*

This theme was carried on by Qutb in his work translated as “*The America I Have Seen*”: *In the Scale of Human Values*. This work was published in the Cairo serial *ar-Risalah* in 1951 after Qutb’s return home to Egypt. Even though the work was published after his return from the US, it contains an account of his time there and his reactions to the US as part of the West. In this regard, it is an incredibly valuable source of information in the development of Qutb’s anti-Western rhetoric, and his Islamic political thought.

In terms of generalities, his account here is flawed in several areas. First of all, there is excessive presumptive writing about American (and Western) life, culture, and values. This is interesting because it indicates that Qutb set about writing this work with preset notions of what he was going to experience and how he was going to react to them before they actually occurred. In other words, he seems not to have let the experiences entirely shape his reactions. Additionally he makes sweeping generalizations, many of

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<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

which tend to impugn the entire US. There is no mention of individuality, or how it might only be some individual characters who give the West such a dark light in an observers eyes. These aspects culminate in an incoherent knowledge of American history throughout the work, thereby removing credibility from the attacks Qutb makes on the US and on the West in general. In essence, Qutb's writing is more in the nature of a social critique than anything. However, despite the deficiencies in the overall composition and fluency of the writing, his points are clear enough.

By way of his own logic, essentially what Qutb espouses is that mankind is in a morally wayward state and is in desperate need of guidance. Mankind here for Qutb has global connotations; it not only refers to the West, but also to the Muslim Ummah. As Qutb sees his picture of the world, the West (both the US and Europe) are unable to provide any stable guidance because they have surrendered to materialism, among other forces, as their guiding light. The global Ummah has also fallen under the trance of the West, emulating them in their materialistic outlook. The Ummah, who would normally be called upon to aid in righting this situation, cannot be utilized for fear that nothing will change. Though his argument reaches developmental maturity in his work Milestones, it is important nonetheless in his earlier writings as well.

Qutb's work in ar-Risalah appears in three parts, in three separate issues. He sets the tone in the first issue by writing, "America conjures up pleasures that acknowledge no limit or moral restraint, dreams that are capable of taking corporeal shape in the realm of time and space."<sup>269</sup> With these words, it is clear that Qutb is laying down an attack on what he sees as the materialistic nature of the US. Qutb goes on to write, "I fear that a

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<sup>269</sup> Qutb, Sayyid. *The America I Have Seen: In the Scale of Human Values*. From Abdel-Malek, Kamal. America in an Arab Mirror: Images of America in Arabic Travel Literature. New York: St. Marten's Press, 2000, p. 10.

balance may not exist between America's material greatness and the quality of its people. And I fear that the wheel of life will have turned and the book of time will have closed and America will have added nothing, or next to nothing, to the account of morals that distinguishes man from object, and indeed, mankind from animals.<sup>270</sup> Qutb's fixation with morals appears to come from his renewed religious sense, as mentioned previously during his time in Cairo prior to his departure for the US. To live a moral life is one of the staples of Qutb's social outlook, which then in turn has ramifications for the political life of either a country or an individual. Needless to say, Qutb's social outlook is heavily intertwined with his political vision. He even goes so far as to state that morality "is the lasting account and is relevant to future civilizations whereas tools break down and objects perish, only to be replaced by newer tools and objects from one moment to another anywhere on this earth."<sup>271</sup> This is an obvious attack on the morality that Qutb feels is lacking in the US. He further relates that the US is, at its core, about materialism when he states, "It appears that all American ingenuity is concentrated in the field of work and production, so much so that no ability remains to advance in the field of human values."<sup>272</sup> This is one of the sweeping generalizations that Qutb makes that clearly is solely a magnification of a select part of American culture. The important thing to note here is that Qutb is trying to characterize the US based on only a segment of its entirety. "It is the case of a people who have reached the peak of growth and elevation in the world of science and productivity, while remaining abysmally primitive in the world of the senses, feelings and behavior. A people who has not exceeded the most primordial

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<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

levels of existence, and indeed, remain far below them in certain areas of feelings and behavior.”<sup>273</sup>

Closing the first issue, Qutb reaches the peak of his argument in a segment entitled *The Secret of the Deformed American Character*. It is here that Qutb depicts America as God-less, perhaps the worst violation in Qutbian ideology. He writes, “And when humanity closes the windows to faith in religion, faith in art, and faith in spiritual values all together, there remains no outlet for its energy to be expended except in the realm of applied science and labor, or to be dissipated in sensual pleasure. And this is where America has ended up after four hundred years.”<sup>274</sup> In this very Nietzschean-esque sentiment, Qutb offers a verbal warning of sorts, in that when humanity comes into contact with the West, something is lost in that encounter, and that something is God.

The second issue of Qutb’s article carries on much in the same vain as the first. He relates in a subsection entitled *Laughing beside the corpse of a Loved One* that a friend related to him a tale of a funeral this friend once attended on America. The friend spoke of how after the wake, “there was no respect as they began mocking and making jokes about the deceased and other individuals. His wife and family took part in this, giving rise to joyful laughter in the cold silence of death, around the body that was shrouded in burial cloths.”<sup>275</sup> Clearly, even in death, Qutb felt it important enough to place this anecdote in his work to show that the American populace really is a God-less one. It is also not surprising that he included this anecdote given the fact that in 1949, he heard of the account of the assassination of his close friend Hasan al-Bana, the founder of the Muslin Brotherhood in Egypt. He wanted to highlight the difference between how

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<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

Americans in the West and true Muslims viewed the passing of friends. On Sunday, 13 February 1949, an article appeared in the New York Times among other newspapers entitled “*Moslem Brotherhood Leader Slain As He Enters Taxi in Cairo Street.*” [Sic.] The opening paragraph reads, “Sheikh Hassan el Banna, 39 year old herald of the outlawed Moslem Brotherhood, extremist nationalist movement that was banned after authorities had declared it responsible for a series of bombing outrages and killings last year, was shot five times today by a group of young men in a car and died tonight in a hospital.”<sup>276</sup> [SIC] The report later goes on to say that “the Egyptian Government had proclaimed a state of emergency” after the assassination.<sup>277</sup> The article relates that “Sheikh Hassan’s followers were fanatically devoted to him,” and perhaps this is what Qutb wanted to illustrate for comparative purposes. In Qutb’s mind, this would have been a tribute to his comrade. But in a clear vein of pointing out the ‘terrorist’ aspect of al-Banna and the Muslim Brotherhood, the article relates that al-Banna “sent a contingent of Moslem brothers to the front [Palestine] and they were supplied with arms and munitions,” clearly for the purposes of war.<sup>278</sup> To emphasize his point further, Qutb could have pointed to another New York Times article the following day where the headlines read *200 Arrests Follow Cairo Assassination.*<sup>279</sup> Not only did people, true Muslims, hold such a man in reverential esteem, but they were upset to the point of rioting upon news of his death. This clearly contradicted, in the mind of Qutb, the

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<sup>276</sup> Ross, Albion. *Moslem Brotherhood Leader Slain As He Enters Taxi in Cairo Street.* New York Times newspaper Sunday 13 February 1949 p. 1, 26. VOL. XCIVIII, NO. 33258.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>279</sup> Special Section to the New York Times. *200 Arrests Follow Cairo Assassination.* New York Times newspaper 14 February 1949 p., 7. VOL. XCIVIII, NO. 33529.

traditional American wake after a loved one's passing, to the degree that he felt it necessary to mention as part of the decaying moral fiber of America and the West.

Perhaps the most interesting segment of the second issue of Qutb's work is related directly from his time at the Colorado State College of Education. He begins in a segment entitled *The Drought in American Life* by writing, "It is the drought of sentimental sympathy in their lives, and the foundation of their lives upon monetary and material measures, and sheer physical gratification. Americans intentionally deride what people in the Old World hold sacred, and their desire is to contrast themselves with the customary ways of the people there."<sup>280</sup> It is not surprising that this section follows the previous section revealing the God-less character of Westerners, and Americans in particular. It is also perhaps a sentimental reflection on the death of al-Bana and how different he believed reactions were in Cairo.

This section leads into a tirade about what is essentially the right of freedom of religion in the US. Qutb writes that, "There is no people [sic] who enjoys building churches more than the Americans. To the extent that I once stayed in a town with no more than ten thousand inhabitants, yet within it I found over twenty churches."<sup>281</sup> Presumably Qutb was not used to the significant religious diversity that is common in the US, particularly coming from a country where the population is predominantly Muslim. He also seemingly did not understand the social aspect that often accompanies church going in the US. Qutb wrote, "If the church is a place for worship in the entire Christian world, in America it is for everything but worship. You will find it difficult to

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<sup>280</sup> Qutb, Sayyid. *The America I Have Seen: In the Scale of Human Values*. From Abdel-Malek, Kamal. America in an Arab Mirror: Images of America in Arabic Travel Literature. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000, p. 18.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

differentiate between it and any other place. They go to church for carousal and enjoyment, or, as they call it in their language ‘fun.’ Most who go there do so out of necessary social tradition, and it is a place for meeting and friendship, and to spend a nice time. This is not only the feeling of the people, but it is also the feeling of the men of the church and its ministers.”<sup>282</sup> This again illustrates the propensity of the Nietzschean model of the loss of God when encountering the West. Not only is Qutb critical of the people for being God-less, he levels the same criticism against those who profess to be the shepherds of God’s flock. Once again, in Qutbian logic, this is an, if not *the*, extreme offense.

To illustrate his point further, Qutb relates a personal example. Qutb writes,

“One night I was in a church in Greeley, Colorado, I was a member in its club as I was a member in a number of church clubs in every area that I had lived in, for this is an important facet of American society, deserving close study from the inside. After the religious service in the church ended, boys and girls from among the members began taking part in chants, while others prayed, and we proceeded through a side door onto the dance floor that was connected to the prayer hall by a door, and the Father jumped to his desk and every boy took the hand of a girl, including those who were chanting... And they danced to the tunes of the gramophone, and the dance floor was replete with tapping feet, enticing legs, arms wrapped around waists, lips pressed to lips, and chests pressed to chests. The atmosphere was full of desire.”<sup>283</sup>

He goes on to further write that the minister went around dimming the lights, making the venue infinitely “more romantic and passionate.” He then went and changed the music to something that “would befit this atmosphere and encourage the males and the females who were still seated to participate.” Qutb was obviously shocked by what he saw. “And the Father chose. He chose a famous American song called ‘But Baby, It’s Cold Outside,’ which is composed of a dialogue between a boy and a girl returning from their evening date. The boy took the girl to his home and kept her from leaving. She entreated

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<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

him to let her return home, for it was getting late, and her mother was waiting but every time she would make an excuse, he would reply to her with this line: but baby, it's cold outside!”<sup>284</sup>

This scene, in Qutb's mind, represented all that was wrong with the West. God was clearly absent from the American psyche. He was replaced by lustfulness and materialism, both of which Qutb believed dominated Western character. Using this as the foundation for the development of his political thought, Qutb sought to use the Quran as the political means to re-establish God in the lives of those who had fallen away from Him. A sense of urgency developed in this regard, for less than a year after he returned to Egypt, he wrote these words.

In the third issue, Qutb continues this line of thought, but changes his tone somewhat to incorporate a humorous personal anecdote. In a section entitled *The American Haircut*, Qutb writes, “In summary, anything that requires a touch of elegance is not for the American, even haircuts! For there was not one instance in which I had a haircut there when I did not return home to even with my own hands what the barber had wrought, and fix what the barber had ruined with his awful taste.”<sup>285</sup> Obviously, this humorous event in and of itself is not enough to make anyone become a radical Islamic exegete; however, when Qutb had witnessed all that he believed he had in American society, it was as if salt had been poured on the wound.

Qutb moves on in the third issue to write of the role that America plays in the world. As the dominant Western power, Qutb writes of the US “For humanity to be able to benefit from American genius they must add great strength to the American strength.

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<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

But humanity makes the gravest of errors and risks losing its account of morals, if it makes America its example in feelings and manners...America's are the virtues of the brain and the hand, and not those of taste and sensibility.”<sup>286</sup> It is interesting to note that God is absent from Qutb's list of character attributes about the US. This is not by accident. In fact, it is done to heighten the argument that Qutb wishes to bring against the West and the US. By associating the lack of morality with the West, Qutb is fostering a connection with the Quran. Without morality as a fundamental tenet in society, it reveals a lack of God in that society. What Qutb ultimately wants to do is to restore the moral economy, and therefore more importantly God, back to society. The use of the Quran as a basis for governing society is Qutb's method of completing this task. This will be articulated further in what is arguably Qutb's most famous, and infamous, work Milestones.

### Milestones

Qutb's work Milestones was taken in large part, both figuratively and ideologically, from his work found in ar-Risalah. Though written after his time in America, in Milestones (first published in 1964) Qutb articulates the maturation of his ideology regarding Islamic political thought. There are several new terms that Qutb introduces in Milestones in order to complete this task. These terms form what can be deemed a ‘Qutbian logic’ that is necessary to trace and understand the development of his thought.

As one of his most prominent later works, Milestones represents the apex of Qutb's insights on the development of Islamic political thought in relation to the West. As previously indicated, Qutbian logic reaches its maturity in Milestones. Again, Qutb

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<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26-27.

sees mankind in a morally errant state and in dire need of guidance. Mankind as a global entity comprises both the West and the Muslim Ummah. Both the West, as the US and Europe, cannot provide stability in any realm of the moral or political economy due to submission to such forces as materialism. The global Ummah has also succumbed to the materialistic stance of the West. The Ummah, in Qutb's eyes, has therefore been compromised. As Qutb depicts, both of these entities are in a state of Jahiliyyah or an unawareness of the Divine plan for humanity. Jahiliyyah is an immensely important term for the purposes of this research. To understand Qutb's exact inference, it is necessary to have knowledge of what he means by Jahili. Qutb's definition of jahili society is "any society other than the Muslim society; and if we want a more specific definition, we may say that any society is a jahili society which does not dedicate itself to submission of God alone, in its beliefs and ideas, in its observances of worship, and in its legal regulations. According to this definition, all societies existing in the world today are jahili."<sup>287</sup> As Milestones develops, Qutb eventually equates Jahiliyyah with Godlessness. As such, the West, particularly the US, is the worst offender in jahili society. The question remained for Qutb: how to remove these jahili elements? The answer was a purging of society in a very Marxian sense. Though Qutb did advocate jihad to rid society of these jahili elements, what is important for the scope of this research is that he advocated Islam as society's form of government post-jihad. Hence, the implementation of the Quran as law would re-align society back towards God, restoring power back into whose hands it should rightfully reside, and thereby make man God's vice-regents on earth.

Continuing on from the story Qutb told in *The World is an Undutiful Boy!* and sentiments found throughout the ar-Risalah articles, Qutb writes that "Mankind today is

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<sup>287</sup> Qutb, Sayyid Milestones Damascus: Dar Al-Ilm, n.d., p. 80.

on the brink of a precipice, not because of the danger of complete annihilation which is hanging over its head – this being just a symptom and not the real disease – but because humankind is devoid of those vital values which are necessary not only for its healthy development but also for its real progress.”<sup>288</sup> He went on to particularly criticize the West as a civilization unable to guide mankind with what he saw as proper values. The only ones who would be able to do this were Muhammad, and the Rashidun. Qutb stated that “if Islam is again to play the role of leader of mankind, then it is necessary that the Muslim community be restored to its original form.”<sup>289</sup> As justification for this line of thought, Qutb believed “Only in the Islamic way of life do all men become free from the servitude of men to others and devote themselves to the worship of God alone, deriving guidance from Him alone, and bowing before Him alone.”<sup>290</sup>

How to go about this remained a vexing question. Qutb proposed “It is necessary that there should be a vanguard which sets out this determination and then keeps walking on the path, marching through the vast ocean of Jahiliyyah which has encompassed the entire world. During its course, it should keep itself somewhat aloof from this all encompassing Jahiliyyah and should also keep some ties with it.”<sup>291</sup> As previously noted, one of the terms necessary for understanding Qutbian logic is Jahiliyyah, which he defines as “ignorance of the Divine guidance.”<sup>292</sup> Jahiliyyah is a synonym that Qutb uses throughout his work here, especially to indicate that Western society is in fact Godless.

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<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

Reminiscent of Marx, Engels, Foucault, and Gramsci, Qutb writes that his “foremost objective is to change the practices of this society.”<sup>293</sup> Here the phrase ‘change the practices of society’ bears a moment of further examination. As previously mentioned, Marx and Engels thought it incumbent upon the proletariat to enact change within civil society by usurping the bourgeois. Again, though they believed the way to do this was through physical action, they believed that what was necessary first was an ideological imprint upon those who would enact this change. Foucault and Gramsci also believed that ideology was the way to begin enacting change within civil society. One of the interesting things about Qutb is that he seems to accomplish being both an advocate of ideology and physical action to bring about change. As Marx, Engels, Foucault, and Gramsci all agree upon making an impression ideologically, so Qutb set out to do just this in Milestones. One can see the development of this ideological imprint process when following the Qutubian logic previously laid out. Qutb writes that “When Islam...starts a Muslim community on this basis, forms it into an active group, and makes this faith the sole basis for the relationship between the individuals of this group, its ultimate aim is to awaken the ‘humanity of man’, to develop it, to make it powerful and strong, and to make it the most dominant factor among all the aspects found in man’s being. It seeks to implement this purpose through its teachings, its rules, its laws and injunctions.”<sup>294</sup>

It seems clear that Qutb is appealing to the more cerebral sense of man in the hopes of enacting this change. Developing his beliefs further to incorporate more of a Marxian tone, what Qutb later advocates throughout the rest of Milestones is that this change come in the form of physical action. He writes later on that, “There should be a

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<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

movement in his belief, a movement in his blood, a movement in his community, and in the structure of this organic society, and as the jahiliyyah is all around him, and its residual influences in his mind and in the minds of those around him, the struggle goes on and the jihad continues until the Day of Resurrection.”<sup>295</sup> Bearing all of this in mind for the purposes of this research, the simple fact is that Qutb wrote down these thoughts, what he called “milestones on the road”<sup>296</sup> so that the vanguard could grasp these ideas conceptually before acting. By the simple act of writing these thoughts down, he is assuming that his readers have the intellectual capacity to digest and understand these ideological concepts.

To begin to understand Qutb’s anti-Western stance, it is necessary to understand what he felt was the society that he was living in and that surrounded him, both immediately in Egypt and throughout the world. Qutb writes that, “We are also surrounded by Jahiliyyah today, which is of the same nature as it was during the first period of Islam, perhaps a little deeper.”<sup>297</sup> This statement is meant to represent for Qutb the Egyptian society of the 1940’s and also that of the world at large post-WWII, and gives way to that Qutbian logic. Essentially Qutb believed that mankind is in perilous trouble morally, ethically, religiously, politically, etc. Western civilization is unable to provide a way out of these dire straits, therefore Qutb considers Western society as Jahili, or Godless. However, the West is not alone in this dubious distinction. They are, though, the worst offenders of jahiliyyah. As noted before, Qutb also sees Muslim society at large as being jahili because of the laxity with which Muslims regard Islam and all its tenets, as well as the influence that Muslim society has succumbed to at the hands

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<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

of the West. Qutb believed that it is imperative to remove the jahili elements both from the West and from Muslim society as he saw it. It is following this logic that he wrote,

“It is therefore necessary that ... we should remove ourselves from all the influences of the Jahiliyyah in which we live and from which we derive benefits. We must return to that pure source from which those people derived their guidance, the source which is free from any mixing or pollution. We must return to it to derive from it our concepts of the nature of the universe, the nature of human existence, and the relationship of these two with the Perfect, the Real Being, God Most High. From it we must also derive our concepts of life, our principles of government, politics, economics and all other aspects of life.”<sup>298</sup>

In this return to the ‘pure source’, by which Qutb means Muhammad and the Rashidun, another element of Nietzschean philosophy is encountered. As mentioned previously, in his Unfashionable Observations of 1876, Nietzsche writes of the greatness that was once past being possible again. Qutbian logic was certainly in line with this element of Nietzschean thought. In point of historical fact, the Rashidun knew “very well that the proclamation ‘there is no deity except Allah’ was a challenge to that worldly authority which had usurped the greatest attribute of God, namely sovereignty.”<sup>299</sup>

Following on in this line of thought, Qutb writes of his thoughts on Arab society at the time of Muhammad, and in doing so, one can make unequivocal parallels revealing what he sees as the Egypt of his contemporary time. He writes, “At the time of the Prophets call to Messengership, Arab society was devoid of proper distribution of wealth and devoid of justice. A small group monopolized all wealth and commerce, which increased through usury. The great majority of the people were poor and hungry. The wealthy were also regarded as noble and distinguished, and the common people were not only deprived of wealth but also of dignity and honor.”<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20-21.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

It is clear the esteem in which Qutb holds Muhammad and the Rashidun. Albert J. Bergesen writes of this,

“Qutb theorizes an organic connection between religion and politics based upon his understanding of the early days of the Prophet and his Companions in seventh-century Arabia. He argues that the manner in which religion and politics were connected in the first generation of Muslims constitutes a viable model for today. For him what emerged then was a society and political system based upon the divine revelations of the Quran, and while over time there has been a drift from this intimate relationship, it still constitutes the best model for political organization and social life...For Qutb the battle for the establishment of God’s path for mankind is eternal and will persist as long as there is willful opposition backed by the political power and the material force of the state and its society.”<sup>301</sup>

But what of Qutb’s definition of Islam? It is at this point in Milestones when Qutb elucidates his definition: “to bring human beings into submission to God, to free them from servitude to other human beings so that they may devote themselves to the One True God, to deliver them from the clutches of human lordship and man-made laws, value systems and traditions so that they will acknowledge the sovereignty and authority of the One True God and follow His law in all spheres of life.”<sup>302</sup> This is an immensely important definition of Islam in that it gives insight into the true feeling of how Qutb saw not only religion, but also the governance of society. For Qutb, Islam was an all-encompassing mantra of life; Islam could not be divided into separate parts, and therefore neither could life. Life was designed to be a submission to God in all its aspects. To deviate from this was to engage in a danger of the greatest magnitude. Yvonne Haddad comments that, “Qutb believed the collapse of the West was inevitable because it was based on ideas and principles of human origin and therefore founded on misconceptions, errors, and considerations of self-interest. As such, Western systems are diametrically opposed to the Islamic foundation of life grounded in the revelation of God. By separating the social dimension from the fundamentals of religion, Western society

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<sup>301</sup> Bergesen, Albert J. The Sayyid Qutb Reader New York: Routledge 2008, p. 14.

<sup>302</sup> Qutb, Sayyid Milestones Damascus: Dar Al-Ilm, n.d., p. 45.

became an enemy of the religious perception of being. Thus for Muslims to emulate social, politics, or economic patterns of European society is an apostasy.”<sup>303</sup> It is becoming overtly clear that as Qutb viewed the West as Godless, in the Nietzschean model, the solution to this was to install Islam as the heart of the West, most particularly in the political realm. Accountability would then be the ultimate term of society in relation to the ultimate ruler: God. Qutb believed that no matter the aspect of Islam, that aspect revealed God, simply because it was ‘Islam.’ Thus to follow any part of Islam was to follow God. Charles Tripp observes that, “Qutb was adamant in insisting that his interpretation of the nature of Islamic obligation should not be taken as an intellectual exercise only, but should become the basis of effective practice as well.”<sup>304</sup> This therefore held particularly true in the political realm. As Youssef Choueiri notes, in Qutb’s eyes legislators of man on earth should be “God’s agents and His trusted functionaries; their utterances and decisions should on no account express their free will or reflect the desires of secular majorities.”<sup>305</sup> To complete this sentiment, Ahmad S. Moussalli writes, “the domination of human law over mankind illustrates clear and complete infidelity.”<sup>306</sup> In no uncertain terms, then, Qutb believes the Quran should thus be the basis of government because a government based upon the Quran “is not a social phenomenon but an eternal manifestation of God’s will defining the duties and rights of individuals as well as of the state.”<sup>307</sup>

<sup>303</sup> Haddad, Yvonne Y. Sayyid Qutb: Ideologue of Islamic Revival from Esposito, John, ed. Voices of Resurgent Islam Oxford: Oxford University Press 1983 p. 93.

<sup>304</sup> Tripp, Charles Sayyid Qutb: The Political Vision from Rahnema, Ali ed. Pioneers of Islamic Revival London: Zed Books 1994, p. 155.

<sup>305</sup> Choueiri, Youssef M. Islamic Fundamentalism London: Continuum 1997, p. 106.

<sup>306</sup> Moussalli, Ahmad S. Radical Islamic Fundamentalism: The Ideological and Political Discourse of Sayyid Qutb Beirut: The American University of Beirut Press 1992, p. 147.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid., p. 149.

Qutb's vision for change would not only hold true for the West, but also that of the greater Ummah, who though living in predominantly Muslim nations with predominantly Muslim rulers, Qutb felt were being manhandled by other Western powers, particularly Great Britain. "Consider the British Empire," he writes. "It is based on National greed, in which the British nation has the leadership and exploits those colonies annexed by the Empire. The same is true of other European empires. The Spanish and the Portuguese Empires in their times, and the French Empire, are all equal in respect to oppression and exploitation."<sup>308</sup> This is his first statement in this work where he unabashedly names those in the West he feels are partially responsible for the condition of his contemporary world. But he does not stop there; he further depicts his position passionately when writing, "The sorry state of the present Muslim generation, have nothing but the label of Islam and have laid down their spiritual and rational arms in defeat," and that "all the existing so-called 'Muslim' societies are also jahili societies...they have relegated the legislative attribute of God to others and submit to this authority."<sup>309</sup> With these indictments, there is no more need to speculate; Qutb has labeled the targets of his anger, and is holding them accountable for what he sees as Islam's demise.

However, he was not finished. The final target to accrue this label was the US. Qutb wrote, "If materialism, no matter in what form, is given the highest value, whether it be in the form of a 'theory', such as in the Marxist interpretation of history, or in the form of material production, as is the case with the United States and European countries, and all other human values are sacrificed at its altar, then such a society is a backwards

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<sup>308</sup> Qutb, Sayyid Milestones Damascus: Dar Al-Ilm, n.d., p. 50.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

one, or in Islamic terminology, is a jahili society.”<sup>310</sup> He continues on, stating “The Western ways of thought and all the sciences started on the foundation of all these poisonous influences with an enmity toward all religion, and in particular with greater hostility toward Islam. This enmity is especially pronounced and many times is the result of a well-thought-out scheme, the object of which is first to shake the foundations of Islamic beliefs and then gradually to demolish the structure of Muslim society.”<sup>311</sup> The final and perhaps most stinging indictment arises when he writes, “Western sources...a slight influence from them can pollute the clear spring of Islam.”<sup>312</sup>

As we have already seen, this definition of jahiliyyah does not preclude Muslim societies that Qutb feels have succumbed to Western influences in all manners of life. With the US most likely in mind, Qutb extrapolates upon his definition. “They are also jahili societies because of their institutions and their laws and are not based on submission to God alone. They neither accept the rule of God nor do they consider God’s commandments as the only valid basis of all laws; on the contrary, they have established assemblies of men which have absolute power to legislate laws, thus usurping the right which belongs to God alone.”<sup>313</sup> In Marx-like language, Qutb believes that “this declaration means that the usurped authority of God be returned to Him and the usurpers thrown out.”<sup>314</sup> Though outside the scope of this research, it is worth noting that this is the beginning of Qutb’s advocacy of jihad in order to accomplish the goal of returning society and all its elements to God. However, it is clear to see that before advocating any

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<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

kind of physical action, he laid out the philosophical and ideological groundwork for doing so.

In another area that again serves as the justification and apex of this research, Qutb writes that “to establish God’s rule means that His laws be enforced and that the final decision in all affairs be according to these laws.”<sup>315</sup> Here we begin to see how in a very real sense, Qutb wanted to further the development of Islamic political thought. He articulated this sentiment further when he wrote, “It becomes incumbent upon Islam to enter the field with preaching as well as movement, and to strike hard at all those political powers which force people to bow before them and which rule over them, unmindful of the commandments of God...after annihilating the tyrannical force, whether it be in a political or racial form...Islam establishes a new social, economic and political system, in which the concept of freedom of man is applied in practice.”<sup>316</sup> He continues on, writing, “Thus, wherever an Islamic community exists, which is a concrete example of the Divinely-ordained system of life, it has a God-given right to step forward and take control of the political authority.”<sup>317</sup> These statements answer the question of how this research is both political and historical.

It is obvious that as the end of the text is reached, Qutb has become immensely impassioned, and almost militaristic, in his belief that the West is in fact Godless, and that there is no room in this earthly world for such a society. He has even included the global Ummah in his condemnation. Perhaps desperation is too strong a term, but certainly aggressive and vigorous tenacity set the tone regarding what Qutb feels is the heart of the issue. An interesting question to ask here is did Qutb feel a real sense of

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<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

genuine moral, ethical, political, etc. urgency in publishing this work or was it the fact that he was constantly being imprisoned and tortured under Nasser's government that might have made him realize that his life was at stake and his death imminent? Perhaps some elements of both were present. Regardless, in proving how this research is both political and historical, Qutb writes emphatically "Nationalism here is belief, homeland here is Dar-ul-Islam, the ruler here is God, and the constitution here is the Quran."<sup>318</sup>

In the set up to what is essentially the final argument for his case in Milestones, Qutb makes an interesting observation in the sense that jahiliyyah is not a new phenomenon. Rather, it is timeless and all consuming. He writes that, "Jahiliyyah, to whatever period it belongs, is jahiliyyah; that is deviation from the worship of the One God and the way of life prescribed by God. It derives its systems and laws and regulations and habits and standards and values from a source other than God."<sup>319</sup> With these words, Qutb has set his final sights on whom he believes is the ultimate purveyor of jahiliyyah, the US. He writes in accusatory fashion,

" During my stay in the United States, there were some people of this kind who used to argue with us – with us few who were considered to be on the side of Islam. Some of them took the position of defense and justification. I, on the other hand, took the position of attacking Western Jahiliyyah, its shaky religious beliefs, its social and economic modes, and its immoralities; 'Look at the concepts of Trinity, Original Sin, Sacrifice and Redemption, which are agreeable neither to reason nor to conscience. Look at his capitalism with its monopolies, its usuries and whatever else is unjust in it; at this individual freedom, devoid of human sympathy and responsibilities for relatives except under force of law; at this materialistic attitude which deadens the spirit; at this behavior, like animals, which you call 'Free mixing of the sexes; at this vulgarity which you call 'emancipation of women,' at these unfair and cumbersome laws of marriage and divorce, which are contrary to the demands of practical life, and at which Islam, with its logic, beauty, humanity and happiness, which reaches the horizons to which man strives but does not reach. It is a practical way of life and its solutions are based on the foundation of the wholesome nature of man.' These were the realities of Western life which we encountered. These facts, when seen in the light of Islam, made the American people blush. Yet there are people – exponents of Islam – who are defeated before this filth in which jahiliyyah is steeped, even to the extent that they search for resemblances to Islam

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<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

among this rubbish heap of the West, and also among the evil and dirty materialism of the East.”<sup>320</sup>

After this diatribe against the US, it is necessary to return to what Qutb wants to see happen philosophically to combat all the maladies he has just portrayed. He writes, “What is the principle on which human life ought to be based: - God’s religion and its system of life, or some man-made system? Islam answers this question in a clear cut and unambiguous manner: The only principle on which the totality of human life is to be based is on God’s religion and its system of life.”<sup>321</sup> We can see both from these concluding statements in Milestones and throughout Fulcrum, Social Justice in Islam, and ar-Risalah, the Nietzschean notion of Godlessness that Qutb has become concerned with regarding the West, and particularly the US. Along with his anger and vivacity, Qutb’s want for restoration of God not only into the moral economy, but also into the political realm is plainly evident. It would now be up to the people, his fellow Muslims throughout Egypt and the greater Ummah, to begin the process of enacting Qutb’s vision. Importantly in this regard, Charles Tripp observes that Qutb sought to, “impress upon people the fact that their actions count, that they contain within them the seeds of revolutionary possibility.”<sup>322</sup> In historical hindsight, it is clear that Qutb succeeded in this manner.

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<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138-139.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>322</sup> Tripp, Charles Sayyid Qutb: The Political Vision from Rahnema, Ali ed. Pioneers of Islamic Revival London: Zed Books 1994, p. 181.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Qutb is a significant case study when analyzing the development of Islamic political thought in the mid-twentieth century in relation to the West. Qutb was a prominent successor of Afghani in that he amended Afghani's plea for solidarity among Muslims to defend against the encroachment of the West and Westernization as he saw it into Muslim lands, Islamic civil society, and the Islamic moral economy. Qutb's amendment of pan-Islam took Afghani's idea to another level. While Afghani advocated solidarity among Muslims as a means to counter the West, Qutb strengthened this idea by labeling the West as the enemy of Islam without exception. In other words, for Afghani, the West was a problem; for Qutb the West was *the* problem, *the* enemy. Hence Qutb sharpened the focus of pan-Islam to include the identification of, and unification around, a common enemy to all denominations of Islam.

Qutb is also significant because he was the first of the three to travel to, and experience, the West on a first-hand basis. Perhaps most importantly, it is from a unique position within the Sunni Islamic ranks that Qutb was able to construct ideas and arguments for the interaction and dissemination of his anti-Western ideas based upon his experience. He was able to use the ideas of Western intellectuals throughout his own body of ideas to critique and criticize the West. In doing so, Qutb provided an outline for the enactment of change both in Islamic civil society and in the Islamic moral economy. Following from this, he built an argument against Westernization as he saw it, experienced it, and saw the effect he believed Westernization was having upon the global Ummah. In his own ideas and writings, Qutb displayed aspects of Nietzschean thought; namely that when an entity (in this case Islam) encounters the West, something (in this

research, God) is lost in that encounter. Therefore Qutb was able to demonstrate that the West was in fact God-less, and that Islam, through Westernization as he saw it, was becoming God-less as well, affecting both Islamic civil society and the Islamic moral economy negatively. Finally, Qutb wanted to counter the loss of God in Islamic civil society and the Islamic moral economy while simultaneously halting the influence of Westernization by political means. Qutb argued that he wished Islam, particularly the Quran, be utilized as the political solution to the problems that the global Ummah faced at the hands of the West. The Quran, he argued, should be used as law. This would thereby restore God permanently to Islamic civil society and the Islamic moral economy. This restoration offers insight to the fact that Qutb ultimately wanted to enact change within Islamic civil society and rebuild the Islamic moral economy. It also reveals that Islam for Qutb should be both public and personal at once. His writings in this regard also reveal a sense of urgency, desperation, and a genuine concern for his fellow Muslims regarding the West.

Qutb is therefore a central figure in the development of Islamic political thought in relation to the West in the mid-twentieth century. He did so in the following ways, all from a Sunni perspective. Firstly, Qutb labeled the West as the enemy of Islam, par excellence, as he believed the West was God-less. Secondly, he posited the use of Islam and the Quran as the political solution to the problem(s) posed by the West and Westernization. Thirdly, Qutb was a prominent modern example of someone who attempted enacting change within Islamic civil society and the Islamic moral economy. Fourthly, and perhaps most importantly, Qutb undertook developing his ideas in reaction to the West, and specifically, his encounter and the circumstances of his encounter with

the West. These sentiments helped to further the development of Islamic political thought in the mid-twentieth century, most importantly in relation to the West. This is something that Qutb's intellectual successors would recognize and develop further.

## **Chapter 4**

### **“Zar-o, Zoor-o, Tazvir!”: Ali Shariati and the Development of Islamic Political Thought In Relation to the West**<sup>323</sup>

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will focus on Ali Shariati's development of his anti-Western rhetoric in furthering the course of Islamic political thought in the mid to late 1960's until the time of his death in 1977. To begin with, the period when Shariati was politically active is an immensely important time for the relationship between the greater Muslim world and the West. This time period witnessed the waning years of Muhammad Reza Shah's unrelenting grip on Iran, and the reaction of Iran's people, which at first simmered, then eventually boiled over into revolution. In many ways, the history of Iran at the end of the Pahlavi period is intimately intertwined with Shariati's life and thought. This history will be revealed as necessary through the development of Shariati's anti-Western rhetoric, but the emphasis of this research will be on Shariati's thought. It is the contention of this research that Shariati's time in the West was critical in the development of this anti-Western thought. Within this particular rubric of thought, Shariati ultimately laid the foundations for this ideology to be used as an anchor for societal change. Perhaps little did he know that the revolution that would erupt in 1979, just two years after his death, would draw so heavily upon his ideology in this regard (See Appendix 1).

The use of Shariati as a case study in examining the development of Islamic political thought in relation to the West is one of importance. In a very real sense,

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<sup>323</sup> Popular anti-Western phrase coined by Shariati meaning ‘wealth’, ‘coercion’, and ‘deceit.’ Rahnema, Ali. *Ali Shariati: Teacher, Preacher, Rebel*. From, Rahnema, Ali ed. Pioneers of Islamic Political Revival (Second Edition). London: Zed Books, 2005, p. 121.

Shariati draws on and continues the work of Qutb. Though the circumstances of the encounter with the West were different for both men, there are underlying similarities in the rhetoric they produced – namely, the identification of a common enemy for Islam: the West. Around this problem, or perhaps more correctly, around the solution to this problem, is something which they desired the global Ummah to unite. Though there is no evidence that Qutb and Shariati, who were roughly contemporaries, ever met, evidence emerges in Shariati's written work that indicated he was familiar with Qutb's work, and was even sympathetic and apologetic towards it. This is interesting and important in and of itself, and lies at the heart of why Shariati is an important thinker to examine following Qutb. Not only is there a continuity of thought between Qutb and Shariati, but their thought indicates a bridging of the gap between Sunni and Shi'ite Islam in an important area for this research: reaction towards the West. In a cross-denominational manner, the anti-Western rhetoric of Qutb and Shariati has served an important function: it has labeled a common enemy for Islam, no matter the sect, and afforded a point of unity for the Ummah.

Bearing this in mind, the research presented here will examine the works of Shariati in which he developed his anti-Western rhetoric. In this chapter, this research will argue that Shariati used Western intellectual ideas from Marx, Engels, Foucault, and Gramsci to construct arguments against aspects of orientalism, criticism of the West, and for the enactment of change in Islamic civil society. Shariati, this research argues, also uses Nietzsche's idea of the West as Godless to react against Westernization as he saw it, for the part it played in the erosion of Islamic civil society and the Islamic moral economy. Ultimately Shariati arrived at the solution to the Ummah's problems at the

hands of the West via the use of the Quran and Islam as government and law. Through the use of these various ideas, Shariati's goal, this chapter contends, was to enact change within Islamic civil society and simultaneously defend the Islamic moral economy from the corrupt influences of the West. Unlike Qutb, this research has uncovered no autobiography of Shariati that one can turn to in order to examine Shariati's youth and childhood in order to determine the earliest point of departure for his anti-Western thought. Hence, a brief but necessary overview of Shariati's life based on secondary literature must suffice until the time when his own works arise and can provide a guide for the development of his thought.

*The Beginnings of Shariati's Anti-Western Rhetoric:*

*The Young Ali and his Father, Mohammad-Taqi Shariati*

Though Shariati wrote prolifically and touched upon many disciplines in doing so, he did not commence the development of anti-Western writings until he was fairly ensconced in his teaching career. In fact, most of what would constitute his 'books' were lectures that he delivered at Iran's various educational institutions that were then transcribed and gathered into volumes that were sold as books either by himself or by his various students.

For the purposes of research such as this, however, it is important to have a brief knowledge of how Shariati became politicized in his life. Hence, an examination of Shariati's work in this research will commence with an examination of his early life and family life. Ali Shariati was born on 24 November 1933 to Mohammad-Taqi and Zahra Shariati in the village of Kahak outside of Sabzevar, Iran. He was the only male child

among his three sisters. Much like the Qutb family in Egypt, the Shariati family had fallen upon hard economic times. Similarly to Qutb, Shariati had a great reverence for his mother during his childhood, though it would be his father who would have the most important influence upon him in terms of Ali's politicization. Shortly after the Allied invasion of Iran in the Fall of 1941, Ali began his education, entering the first grade. Education, however, was not to be something that the young Ali took seriously. Completely different from Qutb in this manner, "all the way through school, Ali was neither interested in his studies nor motivated to work hard."<sup>324</sup> Interestingly for one who would later achieve a PhD, Ali's initial indifference towards academics became part of his public persona and character. This, however, disguised Ali's avid love of reading. He would often stay up late into the night reading with his father, and during his first years of primary school, became acquainted with his father's impressive 2000 volume library. Author Ali Rahnema notes that Ali's self-education replaced what he would learn, or not learn as the case may be, in class. His teachers took note of Ali's natural intellect, but also of his perceived laziness.<sup>325</sup>

In the Fall of 1947, Ali entered Ferdowsi High School in Mashad and in 1950 at his father's urging, took the notoriously difficult Teachers Training College exam. (See Map 3). He passed the exam and was admitted to the Teachers Training College, where his father taught Arabic and Religious Studies. Though graduating in 1952 and beginning work for the Iranian Ministry of Education shortly thereafter, it was at the Teachers College where Ali began to become a politicized young man, very much under his father's guidance.

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<sup>324</sup> Rahnema, Ali. An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of Ali Shariati. London: I. B. Tauris, 2000 p. 37.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

All research indicates that the earliest political influence upon Shariati came from his father, Mohammad-Taqi Shariati. Mohammad-Taqi was descended from an established professional religious family whose roots were planted in Mazinan, a small village on the outskirts of the desert in Khorasan, Iran. Mohammad-Taqi was born there in 1907, initially destined for a life of theological studies. However, a few years after the birth of Ali in 1933, the western-dressing Muhammad-Taqi broke with family tradition by not returning to Mazinan and becoming a cleric, though he was qualified to do so. Rather, he felt he could put his talents to use most effectively by becoming a teacher, “taking it upon himself to educate those he believed to be the future agents of change in Iran, the young Islamic intellectuals.”<sup>326</sup> It was on the heels of the Allied Occupation of Iran in WWII that the world witnessed the first replacement of Reza Shah as the ruler of Iran. Hence 1941 was a critical year in that upon the Shah’s removal, the autocratic and centralized government that he created tumbled to pieces. As author Ali Rahnema notes, this initiated a period of political and intellectual freedom in Iran. Mohammad-Taqi utilized this newfound wave of freedom to enhance his teaching career, dedicating his life to “both defending Islam and defining the outlines of a ‘revived’ Islam compatible with modern conditions and responsive to the demands of an ever more socially conscious youth.”<sup>327</sup>

The decision to become a teacher offered a path filled with roadblocks. And what these roadblocks entailed soon became apparent. Mohammad-Taqi was unique in his view of Islam, in that he differed in his belief from the traditional clergy of the time by being sympathetic to some of Ahmad Kesravi’s critiques of Shi’ism and some the Tudeh

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<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11-12.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

Party's social concerns. Though not wholly agreeing with either camp, his way of thinking was at least traditional and inspirational enough and to warrant an unofficial blessing from Grand Ayatollah Borujerdi, though Borujerdi would later become indifferent to Mohammad-Taqi's unorthodox style of teaching and belief. Hence it was in Mashad where Mohammad-Taqi started out on his teaching career, where though partially apologetic toward Kesravi and the Tudeh, he developed great concern over the influence that both were beginning to have in Mashad's high schools. As an example, Mohammad-Taqi believed that some teachers were given higher salaries and promoted more rapidly in the Mashad educational system simply because they had converted to the Tudeh ideology. Mohammad-Taqi held his ground, though, teaching Arabic, Persian literature, and religious studies for double the amount of time as required of teachers, while only being salaried for half of those hours, as a method of resisting the Tudeh influence. In his classes, he attempted to convey through Islam "the urgency of the period in which they lived and to inculcate a sense of responsibility and a consciousness of what should be done under such conditions."<sup>328</sup> So concerned was he about this urgency, that he took to the pen and wrote in 1942 a primary school textbook entitled Shariati's Principles of Belief and Ethics. He even took on the challenge of publicly debating Kesravi and Tudeh adherents. He knew that the constraints of such an approach would not last, so at the suggestion of his students, he organized lectures one night per week held at his students' homes, rotating every week. This went on until the winter of 1944, when one of his students, Taher Ahmadzadeh, offered his home as a permanent meeting place. Imam Hossein's revolutionary ideas, Imam Ali's sermons, and Quranic verses were interpreted, analyzed, and discussed. This represented a departure from the

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<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12-13.

normal lecture structure, and captivated the attention of his students. Even Tudeh adherents began to attend and engage in lively debates, more than likely as Rahnema notes, because Mohammad-Taqi was succeeding in drawing students away from Tudeh ideology, and therefore from enrollment in the Tudeh Party.<sup>329</sup>

So popular and successful had Mohammad-Taqi's lectures become, that he was able to secure financial benefactors, therefore enabling the purchase of a permanent location for his lectures. Hence, he opened The Center for the Propagation of Islamic Truths in 1947 in Mashad on Chahar Bagh Street. At this time, Ali Shariati was a young and impressionable teenager, and the opening of his father's Center can arguably be seen as the earliest sign of Ali's politicization. The Center was a safe-haven for lectures and discussions. Later, the Center was even able to churn out publications. As Ali Rahnema notes, "The message, goals, and everyday practices of the Center contained the germs of certain new ideas and traits which could be considered reformist and modernist....Within their capacity, members were encouraged to engage in independent research to grasp the logic of religious tenets....The revitalization of Islam was possible if people were convinced that the solution to the temporal and secular problems could also be found in religion."<sup>330</sup> Rahnema goes on to state that, "Religion had to be transformed from a passive and regressive outlook, to an aggressive catalyst, capable of identifying and solving present problems. The energy which was spent on mourning past misfortunes had to be channeled to redressing present predicaments."<sup>331</sup> This line of thought is something that would ultimately stay with Ali throughout his life and fuel his career as an Islamic

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<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

activist. For Mohammad-Taqi, the ‘present predicaments’ were the Kesravists and the Tudeh party; for Ali, they were the Shah and the West.

Echoed in Ali Shariati’s writings were the sentiments that Mohammad-Taqi developed in his arguments against the Kesravists and the Tudeh Party members. Essentially, Mohammad-Taqi believed that in order to understand his opponents arguments, he had to familiarize himself with their ideas and writings. Rahnema notes that this was a rather unusual practice for established clerics of the day. And perhaps as a result of this technique, Rahnema notes that the popular impact of the Center was in the number of attendees that Mohammad-Taqi drew for his lectures. Interestingly, a radical Islamic discourse emerged from within the center namely from one of its earliest members, Taher Ahmadzadeh, who interpreted Mohammad-Taqi’s lectures and gave them a political slant. It was in this regard that the Center played a significant role in becoming a crucial force in the pro oil nationalization movement, as well as providing the ideology and mobilization of the people in 1952 in support of Mosaddeq. The Center suffered a series of setbacks after the 1953 Coup, and eventually was closed in June of 1963. Its impact, however, was to outlast its closure. As Rahnema notes,

“The Center’s most significant impact was through its provision of a non-conventional religious education and an ethical political consciousness, based on certain religious tenets, to a generation which, despite its upbringing and inclinations, failed to see the relevance of traditional Islam to modern social and individual problems....The Center offered the possibility of looking at Islam not as a set of mechanical rites, rituals and practices based on centuries old customs and traditions that may have been distorted, but as a living entity capable of providing pertinent modern responses based on an ethical and humane set of universal values. It sought to prove that Islam’s universal values were perfectly compatible with human rationality and therefore in harmony with modern times.”<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

However, the Center was only as strong as the people who belonged to it and lectured there. In his later life and writings, it is apparent that Ali Shariati had learned much from his father.

Rahnema relates that the basis for Ali Shariati's political and social consciousness was rooted in the Center. It espoused an ideology that utilized a modern religious discourse "to achieve the dual objective of battling political and religious reaction and blind obedience to anything other than God while cultivating righteousness, ethics and liberation theology."<sup>333</sup> For the importance of this research, Rahnema astutely observes "for many it provided an imperative religio-political support system, where they heard a politicized Islamic discourse which assured them that their faith had the concepts and tools to compete with Tudeh ideology. The Center also trained a group of political activists whose major preoccupation became to combat despotism, inequality, submission to Western interests and injustice, personified by the shah."<sup>334</sup> This is incredibly important for the purposes of this research. Not only was Ali was among this group, in 1953 due to the respective illnesses of both Ahmadzadeh and Mohammad-Taqi, Ali became the primary speaker of the Center. Hence Ali was being given his first and earliest introduction to anti-Western activities and thought. Additionally, in April of 1953 Ali lobbied no less than eight members of Parliament to include a clause in the Iranian Constitution that removed the Shah's right to intervene in affairs of state, as he was a figurehead with only superficial responsibilities. Again, as early as 1953, only a

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<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

year after graduating from the Teachers Training College, Ali had begun to venture into the territory of anti-Western critique.<sup>335</sup>

Though Ali Shariati was a member of the first entering class at the newly formed Faculty of Literature at Mashad University in 1955, it was not until his graduation with a BA in July of 1958 and his qualification for a scholarship for a PhD in France that Shariati's encounter with the West head-on truly began. Ironically, the scholarship to study in the West was entirely unexpected. Shariati was expecting to graduate from Mashad in the Summer if 1958, but was told that due to an abundance of absences from classes, that he would not be able to take his final exams until September. With pleading, intervention from mentors, and negotiation, Shariati was able to take his exams in June of 1958. During this examination period, Shariati received a perfect exam score in Arabic and was in fact asked by his professor to grade the other exam papers. No other exam came remotely close to receiving a passing grade, with the agreement of his professor. This held massive ramifications: all the other students who were supposed to be graduating would have to re-take the exam in September, leaving Shariati and his colleague Qara'i as effectively the only two graduating students from the entire class. By the calculation of grade point averages, Shariati edged out Qara'i by 14.54/20.00 to 14.52/20.00 to become the best student in the class. Though this meant relatively little to Shariati at the time, who planned to follow in his fathers footsteps and teach, in the late Spring/early Summer of 1958, the Shah announced that the top students in each graduating University class would be given a state scholarship to study overseas and pursue further education. The foreign language that Shariati studied was French, and this

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<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

dictated Paris as the destination of Shariati's further study. In May of 1959, Shariati went to Paris, and his face-to-face encounter with the West had begun.<sup>336</sup>

*Encountering the West: Paris*

It is important to note when using Shariati as a case study that there were essentially two sets of encounters with the West that he experienced. The first encounter was the Shah and the Pahlavi government during his lifetime. Though a direct encounter in many ways based upon the day-to-day living according to the laws of the Shah and his government, this encounter, it can be argued, was a diluted one in the sense that one could still be surrounded by Iranian culture and Shi'i Islam. In other words, a secondary culture (the West) was seeping in to a primary culture (Islamic Iran). In Paris, however, the West and all it entails, was at the forefront of life, culture, and religion. Hence in Paris, The West was the primary culture. Westernization did not filter down from the top to the rest of society; rather, it was society. In this very real sense, Shariati's encounter with the West in the form of Paris was an immediate and direct one; it was a primary culture (The West) overshadowing and influencing a pre-existant culture (Shariati's Iranian-ness).

Bearing this in mind, Shariati arrived in Paris in late May 1959. In a manner that is completely unreflective of Qutb's time in the US, Shariati wished to initially avoid continuous contact with the Iranian Diaspora in Paris, and sought accommodation with a French family who would rent him a room in their home. As a lodger at the Bodin family home in the Fifteenth District, Shariati set about auditing a French language class in order to cope with the rigors of the French language while in academia. He did so at the

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<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86-87.

Institut Pantheon. This, however, was to be a short-lived venture. He dropped out of his French class, and decided to teach himself the language by continuing a project from Mashad that he had formerly embarked upon. The project was to translate Alexis Carrel's Supplications, with the aid of a French-Persian dictionary. In the meantime, Shariati increasingly longed for home despite being in Paris for only a short time. In a letter to Kazem Motahedin on 1 July 1959, Shariati wrote "the first thing one notices here is the approach of the inevitable and certain demise of the Europe that plundered everything we had...inventions and innovations are only conducted in the field of dance, cabaret, wine, and gambling houses. Research is limited to the variety of ways and kinds of copulation among the different people of the world, fashion, eroticism, and the means of welcoming and looking after tourists and rich Americans and Orientals."<sup>337</sup>

Interestingly for the purposes of this research, Rahnema notes, "Even though Shariati acknowledged his 'bewilderment' before the grandeur of the educational institutions and libraries of Paris, he believed that since the youth were becoming corrupt and ethical values belonged to the outgoing older generation, society was doomed."<sup>338</sup> This notion is immensely important in that it indicates the first instance of Shariati's disdain for the West while actually in the West itself, and having experienced the West from within. It also echoes Qutb's chastisement of the younger generation, both of the West and by extrapolation, the Ummah. Qutb believed he saw what the effects of Western youth were having not only upon the Muslim youth in Egypt but also of the greater Ummah. Undoubtedly, Shariati knew that under the influence of the West via the Shah, this

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<sup>337</sup> Shariati, Ali. Collected Works Vol. 34 as found in Rahnema, Ali. An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of Ali Shariati. London: I. B. Tauris, 2000, p. 91.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

corruption of the Western youth would eventually find its way to Iran and seep its way into the youths of Shi'ism. As he would later write, this was not a tantalizing prospect.

Yet despite this commentary on the state of Western youth, and by proxy Western society, Paris held a world of discovery for Shariati. Due to a bureaucratic snafu, the subject in which Shariati wished to obtain his Doctorate, sociology, was not accepted by the Iranian authorities. Rather, they dictated to him that he must obtain his Doctorate in the same subject in which he earned his BA, literature. At this news, Shariati was devastated. Yet in typical Shariati style, he pursued a double academic life. As Rahnema writes, “The dreary and mechanical exercise of fulfilling the requirements of a doctorate for which the government had sent him to Paris was to him a soulless chore, for which he was to do the minimum with the least amount of enthusiasm. Conversely, driven by sheer joy, like a bee in a rose garden, he plunged himself passionately into the survey and study of all the different courses that seemed interesting to him.”<sup>339</sup>

Amid this free-form academic curricula that Shariati developed for himself, he was also interested in political events that were happening back home in Iran. These events would soon play a role in Shariati’s politicization in Paris. In 1961, the Iran Freedom Movement (IFM) was founded in Tehran by Mehdi Bazargan, Mahmud Taleqani, and Yadollah Sahabi upon four principles: Islam was the ideological anchor of the group and was inseparable from politics; nationalism; constitutionally adherent with freedom of press, opinion, and assembly plus judiciary independence, free elections, and separation of powers; Mossadeq was the only leader of state that was legitimately elected. The arrival of the IFM on the Iranian political scene was extremely important in terms of this research on Shariati because in addition to the fact that the group lined up

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<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

ideologically with Shariati, Bazargan was a type of role model for Shariati - he was a genuine religious reformer and modernist. The birth of the IFM also inspired many Iranian students abroad to become politically active, including Shariati. He subsequently became involved in the Second National Front, a writer for several anti-government publications, and became active in the Union of Iranian Students in France, and the Confederation of Iranian Students in Europe and the US. Rahnema states of these activities, “the immediate object of Shariati’s revived political interest was the conviction that the new political conjuncture allowed for freeing Iran from what he believed to be the grips of a foreign-dominated, usurper and dictatorial regime.”<sup>340</sup>

Mirroring Afghani and Qutb, from the summer of 1961 onwards Shariati took to writing as the main method of enacting criticism against the West. Shariati’s first venture into writing in Paris came in December of 1961, where he translated Nejar’s poem *The Black Tempest* and included an introduction which criticized colonialism in the periodical Nameh-e Parsi. The name attributed to the author was ‘Ayn Mazinani, an alias or pen name for Shariati.<sup>341</sup> This was only the initial spark that would later ignite into flame. Though he was disenchanted by the Congress of the World Confederation of Iranian Students meeting in Paris during the Winter of 1961-1962, he was not ready to give up on the anti-regime front. Rahnema notes that Shariati was beginning to hone in on varying methods of enacting political change. Based upon the success of the revolutionary movements in both Algeria and Cuba, Shariati began to construct a plan for the overthrow of the Iranian government. Perhaps more importantly, and in true Marxian fashion, Shariati wanted to increase the level of student political knowledge and

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<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

consciousness, which he felt was severely lacking, through his writings.<sup>342</sup> On 15 February 1962, he drew up a document that he shared with a small group of his friends, which essentially stated that the overthrow of the current regime in Iran was only achievable through revolution. He believed that the conditions were already existent in Iran, and all that was needed was a small catalyst to begin the process.<sup>343</sup> Shariati's program for a new Iran consisted of the following: the National Front would be the mainstay for coalescing the actions and ideas of both organizations and individuals from the varying social classes, philosophical schools, religious organizations, and socio-political organizations, all of whom shared common ideas about the country. He believed that the National Front would "free Iran from the political and economic domination of foreigners, put an end to arbitrary and dictatorial power, assure individual and social liberties and restore a democratically elected parliament."<sup>344</sup> Towards that end, Shariati also wrote an article (reminiscent of Marx) entitled "What Should We Lean On?" which was an endeavor to conceive a cohesive ideology as a suitable means of communication with those groups enfolded in the National Front.<sup>345</sup> In doing so, Shariati has supplied evidence for the argument against aspects of orientalism. By making constant use of the ideas similar to those of Marx, Engels, Foucault, and Gramsci in all of his writings, Shariati continued an anti-orientalist argument throughout the sum of his anti-Western rhetoric.

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<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104. Additionally, Rahnema notes that that Shariati's document was sent in 1963 to the executive committee of the National Front. Towards the end of that year, five Iranian students from the US and Iran entered Cairo, as Egypt had agreed to train these Iranian revolutionaries in weapons and para-military tactics. It is interesting to note that Qutb was still alive at this time, and it is worth postulating whether the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt made this offer to train these students. Unfortunately, Rahnema does not specify this information.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

As Rahnema notes, Shariati's article contained a straightforward message. Rahnema writes,

"Assuming that success in a political struggle was impossible without the people's support, he identified a 'colossal rift' in all conceivable aspects between the 'educated and the common people.' The educated took pride in the use of 'European expressions', while they detested the use of Arabic words. The common people could not relate to 'European expressions' and found something divine, pure, and virtuous about the Arabic words they were used to. Shariati argued that Iran was greatly influenced by its historical past, including its religion. The educated, however, had their eyes fixed on the future and were ignorant or even hostile towards their own history. Venerating the past, the common people did not feel that the future belonged to them. Shariati's concluded: A futureless past is a state of inertia and stagnation, while a pastless future is alien and vacuous."<sup>346</sup>[SIC]<sup>346</sup>

Shariati argued that in order to establish a relevant political theory, political organizations should not imitate existing doctrines and theories, as these would have been created and been relevant for socio-political conditions other than what he believed existed in Iran. Rather, Shariati wanted both the educated and the National Front to examine such Western schools of political thought, but with an Iranian context in mind. In other words, he wished there to be no blind imitation, or *taqlid* to borrow an Islamic religious term, but an Iranian specific application of such thought. As Rahnema writes, "Shariati reminded his educated readers that a return to Iran's national culture, which was also an Islamic culture, was not reactionary. It was a tool with which intellectuals could communicate. An Iranian-Islamic discourse was thus the key to the hearts of the people who were the engines of the revolution."<sup>347</sup>

Academic Paris of the 1960's was for Shariati a Jekyll and Hyde experience. Paris at this time was at the forefront of numerous debates in both the arts and sciences, priding itself on the public exchange of ideas rather than erudite discussions behind privileged closed doors. Rahnema writes,

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<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

“Selected Paresian cafes in the Montparnasse and St. Germain areas bustled with the presence of towering international literary figures, poets, artists, philosophers, and sociologists who squeezed around crowded tables, read their works, presented their ideas and debated them. Anyone interested could hang around, listen, interject, and even debate. For a regular, formal, and perhaps more systematic presentation, it only sufficed to walk into the readily accessible university auditoriums, where the city’s academic luminaries lectured. To one who sought knowledge, Paris was a veritable free university – a center of intellectual enlightenment, critique and social awakening. Those who drank from this genuine fountain of knowledge readily shrugged at having to forego the ‘bourgeois’ recompense of a formal degree.”<sup>348</sup>

It was largely in this manner that Shariati conducted his academic experience in Paris from 1960/1961 through 1963/1964. Through the influences of such academic giants as Massignon, Gurvitch, Berque, Fanon, and Sartre, Shariati began to apply their various theories to the social and political discourse he wanted to enact for his revolutionary vision for Iran. While studying in Paris, Shariati discovered that a useful and relevant revolutionary platform that was also modern in nature had to be the result of a careful intertwining of both socialism and existentialism with Islam. Shariati knew that if this platform was to have any degree of receptiveness back in Iran, it would have to incorporate such elements, as they had gained increasing importance, and more importantly acceptance, over time. What Shariati did was to attempt to prove that the elements contained in the more progressive schools of thought of the West were already indigenous to Islam. He believed he saw the “mirror image of authentic Islam” in the corpus of Western intellectual writings.<sup>349</sup> “Shariati’s task was to brush aside the dust gathered on the mirror for people to see what he believed to be the real source of the image, Islam.”<sup>350</sup> This is extremely important as it reveals Shariati’s belief that Islam was an all-encompassing entity. In other words, not only was Islam malleable enough, in Shariati’s mind, to already include such principles, but also that there was no separation

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<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

of these principles from Islam itself. As a result of this, Shariati sought Islam as the solution to the present ills of Iran in all their forms: social, political, and economic. Islam was also therefore the ideal way to connect with those of a like mind. Yet there remained a chasm to be crossed: the clerics of Iran did not feel the same way. Shariati believed that “the Islam presented by the clergy was a finger-deep ocean in which it was impossible to swim.”<sup>351</sup> He had reached the decision that the Iranian clergy (specifically) were at contre-temps, and that much in the same way Qutb did in Egypt, the Islam espoused by the clergy and the masses was contrary with what Shariati saw as true and authentic Islam, the “revolutionary and progressive Islam of the Quran and Muhammad.”<sup>352</sup> In Shariati’s mind, this discordance was unacceptable; he thus had to present ‘authentic’ Islam as an alternative to the tainted Islam that he believed the clergy were espousing.

### *Return to Iran*

By August of 1963, Shariati had submitted his thesis and obtained his PhD from the Sorbonne, and in the Spring of 1964, he returned to Iran. However, upon crossing the Iranian border with his family by car, he was stopped at Bazargan by border police who then exercised an out-dated mandate from 1962, whereby Shariati was prohibited from leaving Iran. The border police took this mandate to mean that Shariati was politically dangerous, and was placed under arrest.<sup>353</sup> Shariati was taken to Tehran and charged with agitating national security, a fairly generic but standard charge given to those who were in opposition to the Shah’s regime. After being interrogated by SAVAK, especially concerning his activities with the National Front, Shariati was released on 18 July 1964.

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<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

Despite the celebrations held both for his release from prison and for his return home, Shariati's initial exuberance gave way to a sense of shame for not having followed his father's initial wishes. This soon deteriorated into a depression that took hold of Shariati sharply.

Part of this depression stemmed from the fact that Shariati believed upon his return to Iran with a PhD from a prestigious University, an appointment as a teacher in higher education would be fairly easy to procure. As Rahnema states, Shariati believed that his PhD was a “‘passport’ to a University position.”<sup>354</sup> Upon his release from prison, he applied for the advertised vacancies at both the Universities of Tehran and Mashad, but no offers of employment were forthcoming. Settling upon the fact that his hope of a University teaching position was at this time unfulfilled, he returned to the Ministry of Education where he had previously been employed before going to Paris. There he found success, as from September 1964, Shariati taught at three different high schools in varying locations: at Toroq Agricultural College five kilometers outside of Tehran, he taught Persian language and literature classes; at a high school for boys in Darvazeh Gouchan, northern Tehran, he taught composition and spelling; at Irandokht high school for girls, in downtown Tehran, he taught literature.

Though employed, Shariati settled into melancholy during the academic year 1964-1965, dissatisfied among other things with a non-university teaching position, and missing the intellectual stimulation of Paris. Another reason for his melancholy stemmed from the fact that he slowly realized his vision of Iran that he constructed while in Paris was more of a dream than anything. Even at the attempted assassination of the Shah on 11 April 1965 Shariati “argued that the Shah’s assassination was an accomplishable task;

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<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

the challenging work was that of preparing the subjective conditions for social change.

He said: 'Our society is neither intellectually nor conceptually prepared for what should come after the Shah. Rushing events could be dangerous.'<sup>355</sup>

In many regards, Shariati was correct. Without an endgame strategy in mind, the actual fall of the Shah might be vastly different from Shariati's precious Parisian vision of post-Shah Iran. After eventually spending some time in Mashad after the publication of his work Salman-e Pak, Shariati requested a transfer within the Ministry of Education to their Department of Research and Planning in Tehran, which he received in the Fall of 1965, remaining there until March of 1966.<sup>356</sup> Considering this work as a complete waste of time, even though he had asked for the transfer, it did allow Shariati time to apply for university teaching positions. A job at Tehran University initially seemed promising, but academic bureaucracy proved to be an impassible hindrance.<sup>357</sup> Shariati did, however, wind up being informed in a letter from 20 March 1966 that he had passed an exam for the position of Assistant Professor of History by the Ministry of Education, and that his appointment would be at the University of Mashad.

### Teaching and Writing

The phase of Shariati's life that began with his University teaching appointment is immensely important for the nature of this research. It is not the intent of this research to continue a day-by-day narrative account of Shariati's academic career and life from this point forward, but rather to examine the effect that his time in the West, in this case Paris, had upon his ideological outlook in terms of Islamic political thought in relation to the

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<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138-139.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141. Rahnema gives an excellent account of the factors that prevented Shariati from obtaining a teaching position at Tehran University.

West. It is during his career as a University lecturer in Iran under the Shah that he wrote prolifically and produced the bulk of his anti-Western critiques and rhetoric. The Jekyll and Hyde nature of his experience in Paris, combined with his earlier life experiences, would reveal itself in these writings. It is also important to note that though he wrote prolifically, most of what would be his ‘books’ were not necessarily a ‘book’ per se. Rather, they were collections of his lectures that were gathered and printed mainly by his students at both the University of Mashad and Hosseiniyeh Ershad. Though they do have some continuity of thought from lecture to lecture, that is not always the case. Additionally, there are often no chapters which one can refer to in examining them; rather, one must refer to the specific lecture itself to find a certain point. One lecture might come from the University of Mashad, while another might come from Hosseiniyah Ershad, but they are found together in the same ‘book.’ This research, for the purposes of convenience, will examine each ‘book’ chronologically, no matter where or when the individual lecture was given. In doing so, this requires a different approach of analysis than that employed when examining Qutb. As a result of the varying contents of each Shariati work, this research will use the following structure when analyzing such works: Ideational (influences from Marx, Engels, Gramsci, Foucault); Nietzschesque (the West as God-less, materialism, capitalism, etc.); Solution (Islam and the Quran as law); Influences (drawn from Afghani historically and Qutb and Al Ahmad as roughly contemporaries). By examining Shariati’s works in this manner, it will serve as a clearer and more streamlined method of presenting how he furthered the development of Islamic political thought in relation to the West.

Shariati began teaching at the University of Mashad in the Spring of 1966, where his classes soon became arguably the most popular in the University. Rahnema writes that one reason for his popularity was that “the appearance of a Western-trained professor, using the language and jargon of Western philosophers and social scientists couched in an Islamic terminology, was a novelty.”<sup>358</sup> This novel way of lecturing and speaking had such an effect on his students that his lectures were taped and written down, then distributed to other students. It was in this manner that arguably his most notable work, Eslamshenasi, or On the Sociology of Islam, was produced. The work was registered on 1 January 1969 for permission of legal sale in Iran, and was a compilation of his lectures while at the University of Mashad during the 1966-1967 academic year, in addition to lectures given at Hosseinyeh Ershad and other venues.<sup>359</sup>

### Eslamshenasi

The first lecture contained in Eslamshenasi is entitled Approaches to the Understanding of Islam. Immediately, Shariati gives a precis of his intentions when he writes of ideational structures. He states, “In recent years, most intellectuals have come to believe that talking is no longer of any use, and that to speak of our sufferings is of no benefit. Until now, we have constantly talked and discussed our sufferings without doing anything or taking any action. We must therefore close the era of talking, and everyone must begin acting by reforming his family or his city. In my opinion, this view is based on an oversight, because in reality we have not talked up to now, we have not spoken of our sufferings, we have not closely and scientifically analyzed our sufferings. All we have done is to moan in our misery, and it is obvious that such moaning is of no

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<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195. The original version of Eslamshenasi is over 600 pages long with some 400 footnotes, indicating, according to Rahnema, that Shariati had significant input in its final version.

value.”<sup>360</sup> He then goes on to ask an immensely important question, one that is in essence a timeless one. He asks, “What is the basic factor that causes a society suddenly to change and develop, or suddenly to decay and decline? The factor that sometime causes a society to make a positive leap forward; to change totally in character, its spirit, its aim and its form, in the course of one or two centuries; and to change completely the individual and social relationships obtaining in it?”<sup>361</sup> Shariati is clearly concerned about the condition of his country and Islamic society in Iran and expresses his concern in philosophical terms. Though there are tones of Marx present in his ideational constructs, he, like Marx, has chosen a route to combat these concerns that he feels will be more effective towards spreading his message – through writing.

Continuing his concern about the state of Iranian society and Iranian Islam, he writes, “From this we deduce the following conclusion: Islam is the first school of social thought that recognizes the masses as the basis, the fundamental and conscious factor in determining history and society...According to Islam, there are four fundamental factors of social development and change – personality, tradition, accident, and al-nas, ‘the people.’”<sup>362</sup> This notion of al-nas will come to figure prominently in Shariati’s works, especially in relation to the West. The people are essentially whom Shariati is arguing for, counting himself among them. And not just ‘people’ as a general term; rather Shariati seems to imply that al-nas refers to Iranian Muslims in this context. However, he soon comes to state that al-nas is referring to the global Ummah. Much in the way that Qutb began by focusing on Egyptian Muslims, he eventually expanded his writings to

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<sup>360</sup> Shariati, Ali. On the Sociology of Islam. Oneonta, New York: Mizan Press, 1979 p. 39.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49-50.

include the global Ummah. In this respect, Shariati seems to be mirroring Qutb. Shariati writes, “The audience of a religion is, moreover, not a single generation or age, but different and successive generations which follow each other throughout history. They inevitably differ from each other with respect to a way of thought, level of thought, and angle of vision. The language a religion chooses in order to convey its concepts must, then be a versatile and multi-faceted language, each aspect and facet of which addresses itself to a particular generation and class of men.”<sup>363</sup>

By defining that the audience of religion, in this particular case Islam, is not that of a specific time or place, Shariati is laying the foundation for what will become an important precedent in Islamic political thought in relation to the West. This was started by Qutb but articulated in much more philosophic, and perhaps even counter-intuitively, clearer terms by Shariati. He goes on to state, “Man is not merely the vice-regent of God upon earth but also his relative...All men are not simply equal; they are brothers. The difference between equality and brotherhood is quite clear. Equality is a legal concept, while brotherhood proclaims the uniform nature and disposition of all men; all men originate from a single source, whatever their color.”<sup>364</sup> Shariati relates this to Islam by writing, “From the point of view of Islam, man is the only being responsible not only for his own destiny, but also for the fulfillment of a divinely entrusted mission in this world; he is the bearer of God’s Trust in the world and in nature.”<sup>365</sup> [SIC] In other words, Shariati is stating that if there is a force at work that is operating counter to this ‘divinely entrusted mission’, man has the duty and responsibility to act in a manner which removes that counter-force.

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<sup>363</sup> Shariati, Ali. *Man and Islam* from *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>364</sup> Shariati, Ali. *Man and Islam* from *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>365</sup> Shariati, Ali. *Man and Islam* from *Ibid.*, p. 77.

Shariati's argument also takes on, as he has already intimated, a historical element. He writes further that, "History represents an unbroken flow of events that, like man himself, is dominated by a dialectical contradiction, a constant warfare between two hostile and contradictory elements that began with the creation of humanity and has been waged at all places and at all times, the sum total of which constitutes history."<sup>366</sup> In essence, Shariati recognizes that he is not a newcomer to this struggle that he believes is engaging all around him. He feels, however, that as a historical actor, it is within his rightful place to act towards the elimination of anything counter to man's 'divinely inspired mission' in the world. And in a passage that is clearly meant to depict the struggle between the Shah and Iranian Muslims, Shariati relates the biblical story of how Cain came to kill his brother Abel by writing, "But where does history begin? What is the point of departure? The struggle between Cain and Abel."<sup>367</sup>

In Shariati's depiction, the Shah is meant to represent Cain while the Iranian Muslims (and later the global Ummah) are meant to represent Abel. He further writes, "When man made the acquaintance of agriculture, his life, society and whole make-up became exposed to a profound revolution, which in my view, constitutes the greatest revolution in history. It was a revolution that produced a new man, a powerful and evil man, as well as the age of civilization and discrimination."<sup>368</sup> For Shariati, this new man is modeled upon Cain, and reflected in/as the Shah. He writes, "Similarly, the fact that Abel died without issue and mankind today consists of the heirs of Cain also means society, government, religion, ethics, world-view and conduct of Cain have become

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<sup>366</sup> Shariati, Ali. *The Philosophy of History: Cain and Abel* from *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>367</sup> Shariati, Ali. *The Philosophy of History: Cain and Abel* from *Ibid.*, p. 98-99.

<sup>368</sup> Shariati, Ali. *The Philosophy of History: Cain and Abel* from *Ibid.*, p. 99.

universal, so that the disequilibrium and instability of thought and mortality that prevail in every society and every age derive from this fact.”<sup>369</sup>

This is an immensely important statement for the purposes of this research. Shariati is obviously infuriated by the fact that the death of Abel was (arguably) accepted, and fears that this too is the way Islam will pass should Muslims not stand up and act to save Islam. He is equally angered at what he believes to be the West as the ‘heirs of Cain’, and how these heirs as the rulers of Western governments, and additionally any leader who follows the Western paradigm, have not only universalized but condoned the degradation of all aspects of society. It is these ‘heirs’ that Shariati describes who have polluted Qutb’s ‘clear spring’ of Islam, and is a sentiment to which Shariati would have most certainly agreed. In fact , this is evident when Shariati writes,

“The transhistorical struggle between Abel and Cain is also the struggle between Tauhid and shirk, between justice and human unity on the one hand, and social and radical discrimination on the other. There has existed throughout human history, and there will continue to exist until the last day, a struggle between the religion of deceit, stupefaction and justification of the status quo and the religion of awareness, activism, and revolution. The end of time will come when Cain dies and the system of Abel is established anew. The inevitable revolution will mean the end of the history of Cain; equality will be realized throughout the world, and human unity and brotherhood will be established through equity and justice.”<sup>370</sup> [SIC]

Shariati recognizes that the struggle between Abel and Cain, good and evil, Islam and the West, has lasted over vast periods of history, so in that regard, he is reminding his audience that this struggle is not new. While on the surface implying that the end of time indicates just that, he also means that in the context of the current history of Iran, the end of time indicates the end of the Shah’s reign. In this regard, the end of the history of Cain means the end of the Pahlavi Dynasty, and the system of Abel, or Islam, will be recognized by the global Ummah, but begin with and be brought about by a revolution in

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<sup>369</sup> Shariati, Ali. *The Philosophy of History: Cain and Abel* from *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>370</sup> Shariati, Ali. *The Philosophy of History: Cain and Abel* from *Ibid.*, p. 108-109.

Iran. Shariati goes on to write that it is the duty of every individual in a certain historical age to act in the revolution and not stand idly by.<sup>371</sup>

Shariati's first mention of the West by name in Eslamshenasi comes when he writes, "In Europe, ancient Rome devoted itself to murder and bloodshed, to establish political mastery of the world, to accumulating the all wealth of Europe and Asia; it immersed itself in enjoyment and pleasure..."<sup>372</sup> Interestingly for Shariati, he feels that there is a historical precedent for the behavior of the West going back to ancient times. This paradigm of colonialism and imperialism that he previously mentions as structures of Cain are therefore rooted in history and have been passed on to subsequent generations of Cain, or the West. And this paradigm, Shariati believes, needs shifting. Picking up on his previous notion of tawheed, he writes, "Tauhid bestows upon man independence and dignity. Submission to Him alone – the supreme norm of all being – impels man to revolt against all lying powers, all the humiliating fetters and fear of greed."<sup>373</sup> [SIC] It is in this capacity that Shariati summarily reflects the mantle of Nietzsche depicting the West as God-less. He does so, however, from a personal perspective. As author Mehrzad Boroujerdi notes, "His disdain of the West was not that of an Islamic mystic unaware of the West but that of a disillusioned Western-educated intellectual."<sup>374</sup> Yet this paradigmatic shift, author Mangol Bayat-Philipp argues, was couched in a Western

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<sup>371</sup> Shariati, Ali. The Philosophy of History: Cain and Abel from Ibid., p. 109. Shariati notes in the next segment of Eslamshenasi entitled The Dialectic of Society that such structures of society as slavery, bourgeoisie, capitalism, culminating in imperialism compromise the structure of Cain. P. 111-112.

<sup>372</sup> Shariati, Ali. Man and Islam from Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>373</sup> Shariati, Ali. The World-View of Tauhid from Ibid., p. 87. Shariati defines Tauhid as a world-view by seeing existence as a whole as a single and unbroken form. P.82.

<sup>374</sup> Boroujerdi, Mehrzad. Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996 p. 114.

framework.<sup>375</sup> Despite this, however, Shariati carries this mantle one step further by stating that it is incumbent upon men to institute a revolt, should not submission to God alone be achieved. Distraction by the structures of Cain (materialism, capitalism, imperialism, etc.) is simply unacceptable for Shariati.

In that regard, Shariati offers his definition of what he believes materialism is and where it sprang from; “The agricultural system resulted in restricting of the sources of production present in nature. It brought about the emergence of advanced tools of production, complex relations of production...”<sup>376</sup> This is an important definition, as Shariati sees materialism as causing division within society. He writes,

“Before this, the individual had not existed in human society; the tribe itself was the individual. But now with the coming of agriculture, the unitary society, where all men were like the brothers in a single household, was divided. The first day that a piece of land that had been owned in common was taken from nature and became the exclusive right of one person to the exclusion of all others, no law yet existed under the name of law, religion, or inheritance; it was purely a matter of force. The strength of the more powerful members of the tribe in the system of pastoral ownership had served to protect the tribe and to increase its social prestige, or its sustenance from hunting and fishing; it fulfilled both of these functions for the sake of the tribe. But now it became the sole source for the determination of ‘rights,’ the measure of private consumption and primary factor in the acquisition of private ownership...Power and coercion were the factor that first bestowed ownership on the individual. Power brought about private ownership, and then in turn private ownership bestowed permanence on power and strengthened it by making it something legal and natural.”<sup>377</sup>

He expands further upon this theme of materialism dividing society when he writes of greed. “Private ownership bisected the unitary society. When acquisition and private possession became the norm, nobody was willing to content abstemiously with the amount he genuinely needed.”<sup>378</sup> As a result, Shariati believes that God has been replaced by these forces. And through the use of pertinent metaphors, he goes on to

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<sup>375</sup> Bayat-Phillip, Mangol. *Shi'ism In Contemporary Iranian Politics: The Case of Ali Shariati* from Kedourie, Eli and Haim, Sylvia G. eds. *Towards a Modern Iran: Studies in Thought, Politics, and Society* London: Frank Cass, 1980 p. 165-67.

<sup>376</sup> Shariati, Ali. *The Philosophy of History: Cain and Abel* from Shariati, Ali. *On the Sociology of Islam*. Oneonta, New York: Mizan Press, 1979 p. 100.

<sup>377</sup> Shariati, Ali. *The Philosophy of History: Cain and Abel* from *Ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>378</sup> Shariati, Ali. *The Philosophy of History: Cain and Abel* from *Ibid.*, p. 100.

depict how the “eagles” (clearly meant to be the US, as the eagle is one of the symbols of the US) have broken and driven away the other birds.<sup>379</sup>

Using other symbolisms and metaphors, Shariati goes on to describe what is meant to represent the Shah. He writes,

“The ruler equals the king, owner, aristocracy. In the primitive and backward stages of social development, this pole is represented by a single individual, a single force that exercises power and absorbs all three powers [king, owner, and aristocracy] into itself. It represents a single visage, the visage of Cain. But at later stages in the development and evolution of the social system, of civilization and culture, and the growth of the different dimensions of social life and class structure, this pole acquires three separate dimensions and presents itself under all three aspects. It has a political manifestation – power, an economic manifestation – wealth, and a religious manifestation – asceticism.”<sup>380</sup>

He continues by writing of those who are meant to represent Iranians. He states, “The ruled equals the people of God. Confronting the threefold class of king-owner-aristocracy is the class of the people, al-nas. The two classes have opposed and confronted each other throughout history. In the class society, Allah stands in the same rank as al-nas, in such fashion that wherever in the Quran social matters are mentioned, Allah and al-nas are virtually synonymous. The two words are often interchangeable, and yield the same meaning.”<sup>381</sup> Intending to create a stark differential between the ruler and the ruled, the earthly king and the Heavenly king, the Shah (and therefore the West) and the Muslim people of Iran (and the global Ummah), Shariati has blatantly associated God with the people, and not the ruler, and by proxy the West. His audience would have understood this meaning, and believed that in fact God was on the side of the people during the undertaking of an act such as revolution against the Shah, and hence a revolution against the West. In a very important statement, Shariati makes his case of prominent anti-Western rhetoric when he writes, “Western socialism has retained the world-view of the

<sup>379</sup> Shariati, Ali. *The Philosophy of History: Cain and Abel* from *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>380</sup> Shariati, Ali. *The Dialectic of Society* from *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>381</sup> Shariati, Ali. *The Dialectic of Society* from *Ibid.*, p. 116.

Western Bourgeoisie. The political philosophy and the form of regime of the umma is not the democracy of heads, not irresponsible and directionless liberalism which is a plaything of contesting social forces, not putrid aristocracy, not anti-popular dictatorship, not a self-imposing oligarchy.”<sup>382</sup> [SIC] And as if to add one additional swipe at the Shah, Shariati writes, ““Take on the characteristics of God’ – that is our whole philosophy of education and our sole standard! …It is a progression toward the absolute goal and absolute perfection, an eternal and infinite evolution, not a molding in stereotyped forms of uniformed men.”<sup>383</sup> [SIC.]

Now that Shariati has placed himself squarely within Nietzsche’s framework of the West as God-less due to materialism, capitalism, imperialism, etc., he provides a solution to this problem in the same manner as Qutb. For Shariati, the problem he believes is facing Iranian Muslims is the same as Qutb saw facing Egyptian Muslims – almost a lackadaisical attitude towards true Islam, to the degree that Islam, and therefore God, is being replaced by the God-less influences of the West. Shariati offers an alternative to such influences using the Quran as his guide. He writes, “As for the book of Islam, the Quran, it is a book that, like the Torah contains social, political, and military provisions, even instructions for the conduct of warfare, the taking and setting free of prisoners; that is interested in life, in building, in prosperity, in struggling against enemies and negative elements; but it is also a book that concerns itself with the refinement of the soul, the piety of the spirit, and the ethical improvement of the individual.”<sup>384</sup>

As an, or perhaps *the*, archetypal guide for Muslims on correct conduct of life, it is possible to see how Shariati would turn to such a guide for the greater (day-to-day)

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<sup>382</sup> Shariati, Ali. *The Ideal Society* from *Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>383</sup> Shariati, Ali. *The Ideal Man – The Viceregent of God* from *Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>384</sup> Shariati, Ali. *Man and Islam* from *Ibid.*, p. 80.

governance of Iranian Muslims, specifically in light of the Shah's oppressive rule. Hence as Mehrzad Boroujerdi comments, Shariati "maintained that Islam was neither a scientific specialization nor a culture but instead an idea, a belief system, and a feeling about how human societies must be governed."<sup>385</sup> Shariati gives his argument for choosing such a path when he writes, "This movement is from clay toward God, but where is God? God is in infinity. Man, then, can never attain a final resting place and take up residence in God. The distance between clay and God is the distance that man travels in his search for perfection; but he travels unceasingly, in ascent and upward striving to Him who is infinite, unbounded, and unlimited."<sup>386</sup> In very poetic and philosophical language, he has stated that man is essentially continually striving toward God; why not then, as part of that quest, rely upon what Muslims consider the world of God as given to the Prophet Muhammad, the Quran? In this vain, Shariati continues, "How disgraceful, then, are all fixed standards. Who can ever fix a standard? Man is a 'choice,' a struggle, a constant becoming. He is an infinite migration, a migration within himself, from clay to God; he is a migrant within his own soul."<sup>387</sup>

Here, Shariati puts forth his argument against man-made laws, arguing that the only 'standard' (i.e. law) can only come from God. Therefore, it is almost futile to try and rely upon such man-made laws for the governance of society. In this regard, author Ali Gheissari notes that among non-Western societies, religious identity is a critical part of the national culture. "Its recovery," he writes, "is the necessary first step in an overall

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<sup>385</sup> Boroujerdi, Mehrzad. Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996 p. 111.

<sup>386</sup> Shariati, Ali. Anthropology: The Creation of Man and the Contradiction of God and Iblis, or Spirit and Clay from Shariati, Ali. On the Sociology of Islam. Oneonta, New York: Mizan Press, 1979 p. 93.

<sup>387</sup> Shariati, Ali. Anthropology: The Creation of Man and the Contradiction of God and Iblis, or Spirit and Clay from Ibid., p. 93.

movement towards self- assertion...The essence of Shariati's interpretation of Islam is that contemporary Muslim societies, in their political struggle to free themselves from internal corruption and stagnation and from Western economic domination and cultural influence, need only recover their Islamic identity. Without this re-assertion of identity, these societies cannot liberate themselves, since ideological dependency would only prolong material dependency.”<sup>388</sup> This notion is also echoed by author Lloyd Ridgeon. He believes that the appeal of Shariati lies, in part, in his staunch view that within Islam lay the ability to provide a modern “just and egalitarian society.”<sup>389</sup> Shariati continues, “Religion is, therefore, a road or a path, leading from clay to God and conveying man from vileness, stagnation, and ignorance, from the lowly life of clay and satanic character, toward exaltation, motion, vision, the life of the spirit and divine character.”<sup>390</sup> As the Quran contains these elements of ‘religion,’ Shariati has made his case for the implementation of the Quran as law, if not at least the supreme guide for law and governance.

In making such an argument, influences of Qutb can be seen in Shariati’s work. Shariati writes, “Today we see that European civilization is so worldly in its orientation, and so exclusively defines the purpose of man’s life as pleasure and enjoyment, that, as Professor Chadel has put it, the life of contemporary man consists only of making the tools of life...The whole meaning of civilization has been robbed of any ideal...”<sup>391</sup> The definition that he uses of man’s purpose in life, pleasure, in this case material pleasure, is

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<sup>388</sup> Gheissari, Ali. Iranian Intellectuals in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1998 p. 101.

<sup>389</sup> Ridgeon, Lloyd. Religion and Politics in Modern Iran: A Reader London: I. B. Tauris, 2005 p. 175.

<sup>390</sup> Shariati, Ali. Anthropology: The Creation of Man and the Contradiction of God and Iblis, or Spirit and Clay from Shariati, Ali. On the Sociology of Islam. Oneonta, New York: Mizan Press, 1979 p. 94.

<sup>391</sup> Shariati, Ali. Man and Islam from Ibid., p. 79.

a mirror image of what Qutb defined as purpose in man's life. Though he does not come out and explicitly say so, it begs the question if Shariati was either in contact with Qutb before Qutb's death, or if Shariati was at least familiar with the works of Qutb. Based upon the wording of Shariati's text and definition of the West as material pleasure seekers, it can be inferred with a significant amount of certainty that Shariati was familiar with Qutb's writings. Furthermore, Shariati continues to write in a Qutb-like vain when he states,

“The conclusion that we deduce from the text of the Quran is, then, that Islam does not consider the fundamental factor in social change and development to be personality, or accident, or overwhelming and immutable laws... It is for this reason that we see throughout the Quran addresses being made to al-nas, i.e. the people. The Prophet is sent to al-nas; he addresses himself to al-nas; it was al-nas who are accountable for their deeds; al-nas are the basic factor in decline – in short, the whole responsibility for society and history is borne by al-nas.”<sup>392</sup>

Hence, both Shariati and Qutb feel the answer for the people lies in the Quran.

#### Religion vs. Religion

Shariati's next work of importance for this research is Religion vs. Religion. This particular work comprises two lectures given at the Husayniyah Center in Tehran on 12-13 August 1970. His thesis in these lectures centers around the fact that throughout history, religion has fought against itself, rather than a true religion fighting against a non-religion. Here Shariati draws a line between two religions, a religion of revolution and a religion of legitimization. He describes the difference between the two in the following manner. The religion of revolution is trying to overcome class and economic status differences while the religion of legitimization is attempting to provide truth and perpetuation of these differences. Shariati believes that religion itself per se is not the problem, but rather that the religion of legitimization is.

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<sup>392</sup> Shariati, Ali. Man and Islam from *Ibid.*, p. 79.

The importance of these lectures lies, in part, in the time during which they were delivered. In 1970, popular Iranian animosity against the Shah was well underway. Yet, certain criticisms of the government and the Shah were not allowed to be publically articulated. This is a significant development, as essentially, any critique of the government or the Shah had to be delivered in code, metaphor, or some type of disguise so as to conceal its real intention. Shariati's audience, however, was aware of this development, and would have been able to see his true intention and decode his message within his speeches. His audience also would have been attuned to the Islamic history of common people suffering in poverty, wars of conquest in the name of God, and the oppression of race and class, all of which were allegedly justified in their time by supposed Muslim mullahs. Hence, it is in this regard that Shariati's speeches and lectures can be seen as calls to revolution, his audience being able to see their own lives as represented in the stories of oppression in Europe and pre-Muslim Iran. In other words, when Shariati rails against the Medieval Roman Catholic church, his real target is the Shah, and his native Iranian Muslim audience would have been able to understand this.

In order to eventually arrive at Shariati's main point in the second lecture, for where this research is concerned, it is necessary to examine Shariati's writing prior to that where he lays out various definitions, terms, and methodology as to how he arrives at such a conclusion. He begins by stating that throughout history, religion has always battled against religion, but not as religion vs. non-religion. He writes, "Thus the phrase 'non-religious' which today we understand from the word 'disbelief' [kufr] did not exist in the sense of atheism, a lack of belief in the metaphysical, in the Resurrection, in the Unseen, in God, in the sacred or the existence of One or several gods in the world,

because all peoples held these principles common.”<sup>393</sup> He goes on to state that, “That which today we define as atheism, non-religion or anti-religion, is a very new concept. That is, it relates to the last two or three centuries. It refers to that which took place after the Middle Ages. It is a definition which has been imported into the East in the form of a western intellectual product, that kufr means a lack of belief of a human being in God, in the metaphysical.”<sup>394</sup> He expands upon this by writing that when a prophet or a revolution of a historical time arose in the name of religion, it essentially arose in opposition or contrast to the religion of that particular historical age or time.

Interestingly, Shariati also refers to the revolution mentioned above as religion. In trying to clarify his meaning, he writes, “These two religions not only have no resemblance to each other, but they are even hostile and contradictory to one another, and essentially, they continuously, without interruption, throughout history, fought with each other, still do and will continue to do so.”<sup>395</sup>

The next part of the text in this work is devoted to a series of definitions, and then answering a series of questions. Certain questions and the answers Shariati gives to them pertinent to this research will be focused upon. Shariati begins his definitions by stating that kufr means “covering over the truth of religion by means of another religion.”<sup>396</sup> He then goes on to define multi-theism or shirk by writing, “Who are multi-theists? They are not people who do not believe in a deity...they have extra gods.”<sup>397</sup> He elaborates upon this statement by writing, “Multi-theism means servitude. It means rebelling against servitude to God and, at the same time, it means surrender, disgrace and enslavement of

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<sup>393</sup> Shariati, Ali. Religion vs. Religion Chicago: ABC International, Inc. 2003 p. 21.

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23-24.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

humanity in bondage to the idols, that is, which deceivers, liars, ignorance, and oppression all built with the help of one another is to invite people to servitude and worship of other than God.”<sup>398</sup> [SIC] He lastly defines monotheist (tauhid) as “A Universal, a Spirit, a Power which rules over the physical form...created by one Hand and there is one Order.”<sup>399</sup> [SIC] Despite this flurry of definitions and explanations, it is important to remember that these are defined as Shariati sees them. In doing so, he is practicing a form of *ijtihad*, or independent interpretation of elements of the Quran and the Islamic faith. Next, Shariati begins the series of questions by asking, most importantly, what a revolutionary religion means. He answers, “A revolutionary religion gives an individual, that is, an individual who believes in it, who is trained in the school of thought or maktab of this religion, the ability to criticize life in all its material, spiritual and social aspects. It gives the mission and duty to destroy, to change and to eliminate that which one does not accept and believes to be invalid and replace it with that which one knows and recognizes as being the truth.”<sup>400</sup>

This definition, is in a very real sense, is Shariati’s call to revolution for not only the Muslims of Iran, but of the global Ummah as well. Importantly as Shariati notes, not only does it give the believer ‘ability’ to critique, it gives that person empowerment of ‘mission’ and ‘duty’ to change the existing system. He singles out materialism as one of the elements to be crushed and replaced with the truth – Islam as Shariati sees and defines it. Shariati goes on to explain this line of thinking further; he states,

“The religion of multi-theism moves in two forms of history. The first form is that of a straight path which we see in the history of religions, that is, the religion and worship of beads, the worship of something which is taboo, the worship of the Magi, the worship of new lords, the worship of several gods and the worship of spirits. This is hierarchy of the religion of multi-

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<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

theism... The second form is the hidden form of the religion of multi-theism, which is more dangerous than any of the others and more noxious. It is this hidden form of the religion of multi-theism which has caused more harm and done more damage to humanity and to the truth than anything else. That is, multi-theism hides behind the mask of monotheism.”<sup>401</sup>

This critique sounds suspiciously like an attack against Christianity on the outside. But if one reads into this critique and remembers that fact that the Shah outlawed any kind of criticism of himself or his government, it reads like an attack against just that in disguise. Here Shariati masks the elements of materialism, capitalism, greed, and blind Westernization of the Shah behind aspects of Christianity: the saying of rosary beads to venerate Mary the Mother of God for her intercession to God on behalf of humanity, the worship and veneration of the various Saints throughout Christian history, etc. What Shariati is ultimately driving at is that in the person of the Shah, all of these materialistic, etc elements are hidden behind the one man and the one government, who claims to be Muslim following God through true Islam. Hence, through an attack upon Christianity, he is really attacking the Shah.

In furthering this transparency and parallelism, Shariati goes on to write,

“I have seen that it is true that the religion of multi-theism is born of the ignorance of the people. Why? Because religious multi-theists, that is people who propagate the religion of multi-theism, are afraid of the people awakening, becoming literate, becoming scholars. They want knowledge to always to be in the monopoly of one thing – themselves. Why? Because as knowledge progresses, the religion of multi-theism is destroyed for that which preserves the religion of multi-theism is ignorance. The awakening of the people means the awakening of a spirit of objection and criticism in people, the divine ideal in people, the seeking of justice in people.”<sup>402</sup>

Clearly here, Shariati sees himself as one who has stepped back from the lure of the Shah and all he entails, and re-calculated what he believes he sees from an educated and scholarly point of view. In doing so, he has deduced, quite rightly, that the best way to subdue a people is through fostering their ignorance. Again, Shariati rightly points out

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<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>402</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

that when people become educated or at the very least desire to seek knowledge, and are therefore made aware of a situation, it opens their minds towards questioning and investigating the status quo. This process, for Shariati, reveals what he regards as the ‘divine ideal’ that exists in each person. In other words the realization that through the processes of criticism, objection, and the search for justice, there is something beyond the status quo established through those in power, i.e. the Shah. Shariati sums up this line of thinking nicely when he writes dangerously blatantly in reference to the Shah, “And reciprocally, confronting the worship of God, there is the worship of an arrogant leader who rebels against God’s commands, a *taghut* who invited human beings to rebel before the system of truth which rules over the universe and the lives of humanity, resulting in the enslavement to the various idols which were representatives of multiple powers of society.”<sup>403</sup>

Shariati, though, is proud of what he considers the path of those who did not succumb to the religion of multi-theism throughout history. This path is Shi’ism, thus validating his religious *weltanschauung*. He writes, “In my opinion, this is one of the honors of Shi’ism that it did not accept that which was offered to the world in the Middle Ages as Islamic power. Its jihad was against the greedy eyes of imperialism and it saw the rule of the Caesars, not the caliphate of God’s Prophet.”<sup>404</sup> [SIC] Turning to historical example, Shariati cites Shi’ism as a stalwart against the onslaught of not only the West during the Middle Ages, but also that of Sunnism as well. Historical Shi’ism, then, is the quintessential paradigm for Shariati in the struggle against the West. He elaborates this paradigmatic notion further when he writes, “Our responsibility is to put

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<sup>403</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

forth efforts for the realization of that religion in the future. This is the responsibility of humanity, so that in the future, the religion of monotheism, as it was announced through the prophets of monotheism in human society, replace the religions which render one senseless, narcotize and legitimate multi-theism. Thus my reliance upon religion is not a return to the past but rather the continuation of the way of history.”<sup>405</sup> In this manner he ends his first lecture.

In his second lecture, Shariati reiterates that Shi’ism’s main struggle was with the religion of kufr, and that history was determined by these kufr-ites. In doing so, they legitimated the status quo. He makes a very important point when he writes that, “As a result, they remained firm of society. As they had continuously held the power from the point of view of economics, from the point of view of politics, the religion of truth was not stable, of and by itself, from the beginning of history to the present time, to realize an objective, external and historic form in a society before them (the kuffar). Human societies, throughout history, were always under the influence and domination of their religion.”<sup>406</sup> [SIC.] He intimates that this historical situation still remains with the Shah in power in Iran and through the maintenance of his ties with the West. The Shah and the aristocratic class of Iranian society are accused by Shariati of living in ease and luxury, owning vast property and wealth, and doing nothing to help their fellow less fortunate citizens and Shi’ites. Shariati places the blame for the deprivation of their social and economic fate squarely upon the shoulders of this upper class. The only society that seemed to care for its people universally was the original Islamic generation. Shariati believes that this society was the only society throughout history to be based upon

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<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>406</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

religion, or more accurately the true religion of Islam. But even so, after the death of Muhammad, this society was not able to sustain its value in this regard, as competition from both inside and out of the religion threatened its stability and values according to Shariati.<sup>407</sup> Shi'ism, as previously mentioned, formed the basis of stability, but the more it has encountered the West throughout history, the more it has lost its monotheistic nature following Nietzsche's model. In what is meant by Shariati to be a characterization of the Shah and thereby the West, he writes, "It is here that the religion of worshiping an arrogant leader who rebels against God's Commandments in the name of the religion of monotheism struggles against the religion of monotheism."<sup>408</sup>

This is extremely important, as essentially Shariati is indicating that the Shah and the West cannot hide behind Islam. They are transparent, and those who attempt to shadow themselves amidst the cover of Islam will be revealed as charlatans precisely because of Islam. In other words, the cover becomes the revealing element. The materialistic nature, etc. of the West will be in stark contrast to what Shariati sees as true Islam. Shariati in fact compares the materialism, etc. of the West to the "idolism" of the Quraysh, the original merchant tribe of the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>409</sup>

However, Shariati ends this second lecture and also the book on a more positive note for his selected audience. He writes that, "In all the history of societies and in social terms, we see that leaders were easily able to run out the foreign enemy and end the racial domination of foreigners when that foreign race and enemy was clearly and directly dominating over the fate of a nation. The arising of these leaders simply and easily

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<sup>407</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>409</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55. The full sentence from this page reads "Mastership and commercial trade of the Quraysh were connected to idolism."

defeated the foreign enemy with all of its greatness and worldly glory.”<sup>410</sup> As a final gesture to his readers, he again returns to what he regards as a historical paradigm – the fact that indigenous Islamic leaders who know true Islam have arisen and removed the exogenous threat with ease. He, in essence, wants his readers to take this lesson away with them: they too can rise from within and rid Iran of the Shah and the West. He is in fact empowering them to do so, and instilling confidence by stating that despite the size and power of the West, it is an easily accomplishable task.

### Man and Islam

Shariati’s next work, Man and Islam, is extremely important in that it provides the bulk of justification for this research. Man and Islam is composed of a series of seven lectures delivered at various Universities throughout Iran. Unfortunately, no specific dates or locations for each lecture have been uncovered at the time of writing this chapter, but the book itself was originally published in 1971 in Iran. It is therefore logical to assume that these lectures were given in 1970 or before.

Be that as it may, Shariati throughout these lectures harkens back to the previously mentioned ideas of Marx, Engels, Foucault, and Gramsci to lay the groundwork of his own ideas. He writes that, “It is only man who can revolt, contrary to the demands of his nature...In short, man is what nature, history, and society make of him, and if we change the environment man will also change.”<sup>411</sup> It is interesting to note the change in language that Shariati uses here; he writes ‘we’ as if to indicate to his audience that he is in fact one of the people, as opposed to just simply a scholar or thinker; language which he has previously used in his other works. It would appear that

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<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>411</sup> Shariati, Ali. Modern Man and His Prisons from Man and Islam Haledon, NJ: Islamic Publications International 1981 p. 50, 55.

by the use of such new language, Shariati thinks of himself not only as a scholar (and therefore a leader) but also as a man of the people. The following passage indicates his awareness of this new position for himself: “Therefore, the function of the free-thinkers is not the political leadership of a society, rather, their sole job is to bestow awareness on the masses, that’s all. If a free-thinker can awaken his society, the product of his mission will be heroes who can lead the free-thinkers themselves...Religion, art, how to communicate with people, poetry, and theatre are all important factors with which free thinkers can work.”<sup>412</sup> These mediums of communicating a message to the people was also very prevalent given the ban on criticism against the Shah and his regime, and thus could be undertaken in code or disguise. And what is intended to be communicated to the people, according to Shariati, is an ideology. He states,

“There is, however, another religion, and that is ideology. It is a religion which is consciously chosen by the people...relative to the existing inconsistencies, for the purpose of translating an individual’s class, or a group’s beloved ideals into reality. Therefore, to begin with, the individual feels the condition of his social class, as well as his economic, political, and social milieu. Since he is conscious of his condition, he is dissatisfied, he is suffering, he longs for change and transformation. Thus, ideology comes into being. The individual aligns himself with the ideology and consequently, relative to it, he ‘sees’ the solution to his problems. And since he finds a correspondence between his ideals and the ideology, he chooses the latter. At this point the individual’s religion is equivalent to an ideology.”<sup>413</sup>

He goes on to write of an interesting notion, by asking what threatens “capitalistic powers as well as the ruling governments today? Only ideology.”<sup>414</sup> It seems apparent that Shariati has crossed some kind of threshold where he now intends to provide justification for the revolutionary attitude he has been discussing in his works up to this point. Throughout the rest of Man and Islam, he does so voraciously.

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<sup>412</sup> Shariati, Ali. The Mission of the Free-Thinker for Building -up Society from Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>413</sup> Shariati, Ali. Ideology from Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>414</sup> Shariati, Ali. Ideology from Ibid., p. 96.

Shariati begins by writing of different world-views. People act and live depending upon these various weltanschauung. Hence, to study these world-views is an endeavor to study and learn about man. The first world-view Shariati examines is based on materialism. He writes,

“Therefore, as men we are what our world-visions are. As Sartre says, ‘Everyone lives according to how he perceives the world.’ Accordingly, the difference among our Omar Kayyam, Hafiz, Mawlavi, Sartre, Camus, and others lies in each individual’s world-vision; that is, how each individual interprets existence. Various kinds of world visions follow: Materialistic: Materialistic world vision is based upon the concept of originality of matter. This view consists of a collection of elements, relations, and actions-reactions which are all materialistic. The world has one element and that is matter, which has no feeling, no volition, and no specific purpose, since in the scheme of materialism the world is not the consequence of a conscious and intelligent will.”<sup>415</sup>

For Shariati, then, the world-vision of the materialist results in the alienation of man, and his discordance with the rest of the universe. He goes on to articulate what is meant to represent both the Shah and the West in this materialistic world-view. Again, he writes, “The third man, who happens to be Camus himself, proposes a thesis which is exceedingly frightening and extremely logical. He quotes Dostoevski, ‘If we remove God from the universe, every action is legitimate.’ Why? Because there will be no will, understanding, and feeling left in order to distinguish good from evil. When there is one person in a house what one does will make no difference due to the fact that there is no one to observe. On the other hand, one’s behaviour will change if there is an observer in the house. But in a world devoid of intelligence and feeling, no action will be of any significance.”<sup>416</sup> Invoking Nietzsche-esque thought, Shariati has associated the materialistic world-view with the West, and argues that the removal of God from the universe will cause society to crumble. And indeed not only will cause, but has caused society to crumble, especially in the twentieth century. In this vein, he writes,

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<sup>415</sup> Shariati, Ali. *World Vision* from *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>416</sup> Shariati, Ali. *World Vision* from *Ibid.*, p. 13.

“Specifically, it means to compare one’s actions and relationships with others as well as with nature and evaluate them on the basis of a single criterion, my own sole satisfaction and enjoyment, since there are no standards to explain the significance of my devotions to others. Therefore, materialistic world-vision will immediately end up in futility.

Today, three hundred years after the renaissance (which marks the victory of material world-vision over the religious) all the philosophies, schools of thought, and arts in the Twentieth Century have ended up in ‘futility.’”<sup>417</sup> This is what, to Shariati, is reality, both in Iran and throughout the world. He writes, “In the materialistic world-vision life is vain and meaningless.”<sup>418</sup>

The next world-view that Shariati writes of is religious world vision. He defines religious world vision as a *weltanschauung* where the world has an omnipotent God. In this world vision, man has fallen away from God, and replaced Him with other false gods such as materialism, capitalism, etc. How did this happen? Shariati writes, “Such a dominating spirit and outlook are the products of the growth and evolution of the ruling Western social class, that is, the new bourgeoisie.”<sup>419</sup> Continuing in this line of thought with equally strong language and emotion, Shariati states that the spirit that dominates this new bourgeoisie is “money-making, business, power-seeking, tool-making, and hedonism.”<sup>420</sup> He furthers his railing diatribe against the West by writing,

“Furthermore, this creature who has superiority over nature, and whom religion designates as viceregent of God in this world, calls upon to acquire Divine characteristics and assigns the providential responsibility for nature, has somehow become transformed to nature’s most menacing beast. This is due to the fact that “man” of bourgeoisie is alienated (possessed) by the demon of money. The essence of money has penetrated within his very nature. Religiously speaking, the bourgeois is a devout and fanatic follower of the faith of ‘consumerism’, who not only fails to see nature as a world brimming with truth, beauty, and the Lord’s hidden secrets, but

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<sup>417</sup> Shariati, Ali. *World Vision* from *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>418</sup> Shariati, Ali. *World Vision* from *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>419</sup> Shariati, Ali. *World Vision* from *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>420</sup> Shariati, Ali. *World Vision* from *Ibid.*, p. 25.

also does not recognize man as a small world having supernatural and Divine talents, beauty, values, goodness, and mysteries. Rather to the bourgeois, nature and man are two sources of production that he must put to use in order to acquire power and consumption, and that's all!''<sup>421</sup> [SIC]

With this searing critique, Shariati again places the blame for “today’s weakened religious sentiments, confusion in moral values and rejection of religious world-vision...toward the exaltation of mental powers and economic values” squarely on the shoulders of the West.<sup>422</sup>

In continuing this line of thought, what he next writes about is perhaps what most incited the wrath and fury of a significant part of Iranian society: the clergy. Very much like Qutb, Shariati accuses the Islamic religious leadership of allowing Islam to fall into a state of stagnation, yet one that is malleable in the hands of those who would take advantage of such a state. With searing criticism, he writes,

“Religious world vision: It is economic materialism which has ruled man in recent centuries and imposes philosophic materialism upon his world-vision. First, the society becomes objectively materialist and life’s order becomes dependant upon production and absolute material consumption. Second, philosophy and science will subjectively depict the world as matter and consequently encapsulate the existence of the universe and man in the tangible materialistic nature. This is how materialistic world-vision supplants religious world-vision. In this type of world-vision, it is the same ruling class, ruling spirit, outlook, culture, and objective order that, with the aid of clergy, transformed the monotheistic world-vision to polytheism in the past. Today, it is replacing the spirit and outlook with material world-vision. This oppressive culture, in order to justify itself, imposed materialism upon mankind.”<sup>423</sup>

He concludes by stating that the West has replaced the religious world-vision with the material world-vision. He believes that Islamic societies, in particular Iran, did this out of taqlid, or blind imitation of the West simply because “They have realized that despite the fact that they possess great and rich cultures brimming with spirituality, philosophy, and knowledge of life, they are so ‘culturally’ poverty-stricken (due to alienation from their roots) that they have their mouths open for any European cultural morsels. These

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<sup>421</sup> Shariati, Ali. World Vision from *Ibid.*, p. 25-26.

<sup>422</sup> Shariati, Ali. World Vision from *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>423</sup> Shariati, Ali. World Vision from *Ibid.*, p. 27.

people's only pride is to learn the colloquialisms, ideas, and expressions of the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, or 20<sup>th</sup> century European thinkers and take them home as souvenirs."<sup>424</sup> [SIC] For Shariati, then, this did not endear him to the trance the West has put Islamic countries and rulers under, and the history that resulted in that trance, both from the Western viewpoint and the Islamic viewpoint. In fact, Shariati comes right out and says that the fault for the current state of Islamic decline lies with the "Materialistic West."<sup>425</sup> In this logic, Shariati has fulfilled the Nietzschean idea that when an entity encounters the West, something is lost in that encounter because of aspects such as materialism, etc, and that something which is lost is God. Shariati believes that the religious world-vision has been taken over by the materialistic world-vision due to "the materialistic order and vile fossilizing life of consumption which has been ruling the West."<sup>426</sup>

From here, now that he feels he has identified the problem, Shariati begins to turn his attention toward a solution. He believes that in order to free itself of the material, social, and economic hold the West has upon Islamic society in Iran (and the global Ummah as well), an "independent consciousness" of the West must be developed.<sup>427</sup> He then asks the timeless question, "What should we do, and in what way?" which would subsequently be the subject of a later work entitled What Is To Be Done?<sup>428</sup> Shariati's answer to this question is effectively to know the enemy, and thereby to "develop consciousness of how the West has deprived us of our cultural and spiritual resources and consequently trained a generation of Easterners who have lost the capability of utilizing

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<sup>424</sup> Shariati, Ali. Extraction and Refinement of Cultural Resources from *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>425</sup> Shariati, Ali. Extraction and Refinement of Cultural Resources from *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>426</sup> Shariati, Ali. Extraction and Refinement of Cultural Resources from *Ibid.*, p. 30-31.

<sup>427</sup> Shariati, Ali. Extraction and Refinement of Cultural Resources from *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>428</sup> Shariati, Ali. Extraction and Refinement of Cultural Resources from *Ibid.*, p. 33.

their rich treasures of thought, ethics, spirit, and culture.”<sup>429</sup> This, however, is not an easy task. In terms of Iran and the West, Shariati writes, “As we notice in the dialectic relationship, the child was despised by the mother but in the meantime in order to respond to being despised he resorts to the mother herself. This resembles the relationship between two human beings, and two societies, the East and the West.”<sup>430</sup> This line of thought, whether intentional or not, puts Shariati in a place of importance and advantage. Though he writes that the Easterner is unaware of his being corrupted by the Westerner, Shariati it must be remembered, has had the benefit of a ‘Western’ education in Paris; therefore he sees himself in a position of being able to see both sides of the equation: the problem from the Eastern (internal), and the way to solve it based on his experience with the Western as an Easterner (external/ internal). This is very important as it allows him to state,

“The exploitative sociology of Europe has realized that in order to be able to rob the East, to ride on her back, and to easily deceive her, it is imperative to strip her from her personality. Once this is accomplished she will proudly follow the West and with unspeakable lunacy and thirst she will consume Western goods... Furthermore, he wants to see all originality, religion, tastes, and various talents destroyed, so that all races can be changed to become consumers of his products. In order to achieve this purpose, the exploiter searches for ways to deprive a nation of its personality, which is defined as the unique aspects of a culture that differentiates it from another. Therefore, a generation, like a tree, must be severed from its roots so that it can be used and manipulated any way the exploiter wishes.”<sup>431</sup>

Importantly, Shariati follows up this thought when he writes,

“Depriving a nation of its history and cutting it off from its culture with subsequent alienation of the present generation from its cultural resources, have reached a point that the cultures which possessed the proudest religions, most progressive philosophical thinking, the most delicate arts, created the grandest civilization and contributed the most experience to human history, today have become so alienated with their past possessions that they have been transformed into a sort of human being that has to re-learn how to dress, eat, read, and write! Why are these societies living in poverty and ignorance while the West and its thinkers, by looting such cultures, are trying to enrich their own cultures?”<sup>432</sup>

<sup>429</sup> Shariati, Ali. *Extraction and Refinement of Cultural Resources* from *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>430</sup> Shariati, Ali. *Extraction and Refinement of Cultural Resources* from *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>431</sup> Shariati, Ali. *Extraction and Refinement of Cultural Resources* from *Ibid.*, p. 40-41.

<sup>432</sup> Shariati, Ali. *Extraction and Refinement of Cultural Resources* from *Ibid.*, p. 41.

In this passage, he expresses thoughts to those similar of Qutb when Qutb writes of how the youth of Egypt's Muslims, and by proxy the youth of the global Ummah, seem to know nothing of their past, thereby depriving them of a source of strength to combat the materialistic, etc., forces of the West. Qutb refers to the Muslim youth as lazy and easily dissuaded and misguided. With the same sentiment, Shariati thinks that the drifting of Muslim youth away from Islam is more of a calculated move on the part of the West on a target audience than an intentional act on the part of the youth. This cultural imperialism, another tool of the West, is of great concern for Shariati. He states,

“These factors relate our youths to what is called the spirit of the 20<sup>th</sup> or new century. A spirit which is one hundred percent Western, begotten by the history, problems, contradictions, and the Western hierarchical (class) order. And since the Western spirit has dominated the earth, the West spontaneously imposes her style of thinking, beliefs, and even her artistic tastes upon non-Western nations. Thus, on the one hand we have roots deep in the East (Islam and our history), while on the other hand our branches, which have nothing in common with the West, have leaned towards the Western rain. So as a tree, our branches are attached to the West, while our roots are connected to the East. And since it is not easy for us to choose between the two alternatives, it is mandatory that self-consciously we analyze this contradiction with faith.”<sup>433</sup>  
[SIC]

Shariati believes that the West has “metamorphosed” the past of the East and of Islam, creating a new but unfamiliar and unattractive history to which it became hard to relate.<sup>434</sup> As a result, and following his earlier train of thought about acting from within, Shariati states that, “We have had no choice but to shatter such images of ourselves and inculcate the portrait of reality in the minds of our masses in the East, and extract and refine our cultural resources, not the way the West has done it for us, but with a method and conscious responsibility, relative to our people and society.”<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>433</sup> Shariati, Ali. *The Pyramid of Cultural Sociology* from *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>434</sup> Shariati, Ali. *Extraction and Refinement of Cultural Resources* from *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>435</sup> Shariati, Ali. *Extraction and Refinement of Cultural Resources* from *Ibid.*, p. 44.

In previous passages, Shariati explained that he believed many ideologies have forgotten man, or left man (a being of free will according to Shariati) out of an ideology. In the above passage, he is trying to have man take control of an ideology by examining, or in some cases re-examining, history from within. By taking this approach from within, man is again a part of an ideology. He writes that what he feels is the most significant tragedy burdening man is that the self has been removed from ideology. He asks, “How can such ideologies forget man? Some of these ideologies are as follows: Materialism – Materialism recognizes man to be composed of material essence. With this definition it imprisons man within the evolutionary frame limited to being matter. If this is the case, it is impossible for him to evolve beyond the capacity of the matter’s dimensions itself.”<sup>436</sup> Though he insists that the West has created and exported an immoral culture, with values consistently misplaced throughout, accepted as universal in today’s world, Shariati believes in remedying the situation by a very important method, something which Qutb had also acted upon. And that is a search for originality indigenous to Islam as the solution to the problems Shariati sees as plaguing Islam and Iran because of the West. Shariati observes that, “Our free-thinkers are living in the Thirteenth Century, but their words, thoughts, and ideas are borrowed from the Western European intellectuals of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. And as such, they cannot find any listener.”<sup>437</sup>

Though figures such as Afghani had made initial historical attempts to attract listeners, they could not quite articulate the disparate elements that would fuse such listeners together into a cohesive and viable force. With Qutb this began to change, owing primarily to the straightforwardness and bluntness of his message. Shariati,

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<sup>436</sup> Shariati, Ali. *Modern Man and His Prisons* from *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>437</sup> Shariati, Ali. *The Mission of the Free-Thinker for Building-up Society* from *Ibid.*, p. 103.

roughly a contemporary of Qutb, and certainly one who was intimately familiar with Qutb's writings and message, recognized this problem of historical disconcordance in trying to carry on this mantle. In this vein, and wanting not to be like the US or Europe, Shariati expresses his thoughts eloquently when he writes, "if a nation cannot know its own cultural and spiritual resources and is incapable of extracting, refining, and turning them into energy, it will remain ignorant and backward while sitting upon piles of spiritual and cultural resources."<sup>438</sup> This sentiment ties in with an extremely important indigenous Islamic element as previously mentioned. It is a pre-existant element that would attract the many listeners Shariati was looking for: Shariati's advocation of the Quran as a (political and moral) solution to the problems brought about by the West. But this, for Shariati, would require change in the current situation, especially in Iran. Hence in issuing a call for transformation in Iran under the Shah, he writes, "All these revolutions, changes, and reforms bear witness to the fact that today's man has freed himself from the prison of society...This is why becoming self-conscious and familiar with this one is the hardest task of all. Here, the prison and the prisoner are the same; that is, the disease and the patient have merged together. This is why getting rid of the malaise is so arduous!"<sup>439</sup> Because Shariati sees Western man as material-oriented and that influence has spread to the global Ummah, and Iranian Muslims in particular, he believes that once material goals are accomplished, futility is reached. Therefore, man must set goals so high that they cannot be rendered fruitless upon completion.<sup>440</sup> In other words, this moves these goals out of the material realm and into the realm of universal ideals.

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<sup>438</sup> Shariati, Ali. *The Mission of the Free-Thinker for Building-up Society* and *Extraction and Refinement of Cultural Resources* from *Ibid.*, p., 113, 32.

<sup>439</sup> Shariati, Ali. *Modern Man and His Prisons* from *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>440</sup> Shariati, Ali. *Modern Man and His Prisons* from *Ibid.*, p. 59.

As Shariati articulates further in his work, What Is To Be Done?, this movement into the universal ideal, particularly for the political aspect, depends upon the Quran.

What Is To Be Done?

In a work that is a collection of various lectures throughout the 1970's, Shariati has chosen a title that asks the timeless question of a people in crisis, What Is To Be Done? From the tone at the end of his work Man and Islam, Shariati most certainly feels that Islam in Iran is in crisis. And in crisis at the hand of the West. Because most of the various lectures that comprise What Is To Be Done? were delivered at the Hosseiniyeh Ershad, a brief description of Shariati's life relating to this time is important to aid in the understanding of this work.

Shariati believed that his most important contribution to education was what he did in the classroom, and which were subsequently transformed into books. He was, however, often at odds with other academics and strategists about how to effect political change.<sup>441</sup> Shariati's writing and lecturing also attracted the notice of SAVAK. On 22 April 1969, Shariati was prohibited by SAVAK from delivering public lectures without their prior approval and later banned from giving lectures anywhere outside Mashhad University.<sup>442</sup> After roughly six months of careful observation and interrogations, this ban was lifted; yet at the end of September 1971, at the urgings of SAVAK, Shariati's position at Mashhad University was rescinded. It was decided by SAVAK that Shariati was too much of a favorable influence upon students, therefore labeling him as a threat to national security and interests.<sup>443</sup> After a six-month period of forced silence and non-

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<sup>441</sup> Rahnema, Ali. An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of Ali Shariati. London: I. B. Tauris, 2000, p. 210-211.

<sup>442</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216-217.

<sup>443</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219-220.

teaching/lecturing, SAVAK again allowed Shariati to lecture, teach, and most importantly write.<sup>444</sup> He was to take up this task at the Hosseiniyeh Ershad, built in 1963 in north Tehran. A hosseiniyeh is a “religious location where Shi’ites congregate to mourn the martyrdom of Imam Hossein and his family.”<sup>445</sup> And according to Rahnema, the purpose of the Hosseiniyeh Ershad was to have a mosque and lecture rooms available for the “propagation of Islamic principles and objectives” and “be the intellectual torch which would lead believers out of their obscurantism to a modern, applicable, and liberating Islam.”<sup>446</sup> Shariati’s father, Mohammad -Taqi was asked to deliver a set of lectures at Hosseiniyeh Ershad in the winter of 1964, making him one of the first to lecture at the new center.<sup>447</sup> Ali Shariati was to give his first lecture there on 25 October 1968, but it was not until the 1970’s that Shariati produced some of his most prominent lectures there, which would constitute What Is To Be Done? It is in this regard that Hosseiniyeh Ershad held its importance for Shariati: it provided a venue and an audience for him to speak about his ideas.

Reminiscent of the ideas of Marx, Engels, Foucault, and Gramsci, Shariati writes,

“We must resist the powerful and continuous onslaught of poisonous and deviant thoughts which have aimed to ruin the ideals of our society and its intellectuals by creating confusion in our belief system, causing cultural divisions and rupturing the spiritual bonds which give us human character and independence vis-à-vis the West. We can resist only by creating an independent intellectual movement, by providing the needed intellectual and ideological resources, by enhancing and improving critical ability, the level of understanding and accuracy of diagnosis, and by strengthening the powerful ideological resistance among our youth and among our intellectuals.”<sup>448</sup>

Though having previously used aspects of Marx, Engels, Foucault, and Gramsci’s ideas, this is the first time in which Shariati uses the specific language of thought, and

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<sup>444</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222-224.

<sup>445</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229.

<sup>446</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229.

<sup>447</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229.

<sup>448</sup> Shariati, Ali. What Is To Be Done? from What Is To Be Done? North Haledon, NJ: Islamic Publications International 1986 p. 63.

academics. The language he employs here with terms such as ‘intellectual,’ ‘ideological,’ and ‘critical ability’ indicates that he has matured in both his writing and in his thought process. And perhaps more importantly has arrived at the same conclusion as Marx, that it lies with the intellectual to explain the reasoning and justification behind revolution and change.

Shariati entitles the first lecture of this work again after another age-old question; *Where Shall We Begin?* He begins by enumerating the problems faced by Iran and its Muslim community, and the global Ummah in general. He writes, “I want to draw your attention to where one should begin in terms of strategy in our society in a given period of time in order to achieve our shared objectives and to protect our values which are at present subject to cultural, intellectual, and social onslaughts. The gravest tragedy in traditional societies in general, and in the Muslim societies in particular, is that there is a lack of communication and a difference of outlook between the masses and the educated class.”<sup>449</sup> Here, he is harkening back to the problem that Afghani faced in his attempt to unify all Muslims through his pan-Islam movement. As surely Afghani found out, Islam is not the same throughout the greater Middle East, nor are Muslims the same. Regional variations in language and differing local customs blended into Islam made it difficult to create unity around even the shared tenets of the religion. Now Shariati has highlighted another gulf: the difference in education between, essentially, the upper and lower classes of Muslims. For Shariati (by way of Marx et al) this is a crucial point for the enactment of change in society. All must have the same intellectual outlook for change to take place. He goes on to state that, “Unfortunately, under the modern and educational system, our young people are educated and trained inside invincible and fortified

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<sup>449</sup> Shariati, Ali. *Where Shall We Begin?* from *Ibid.*, p. 2.

fortresses. Once they re-enter society, they are placed in certain occupational and social positions completely isolated from the masses.”<sup>450</sup> Hence, according to Shariati, there is a disconnect between those who should lead and those who should be led.

Based on his above observation, he writes with a sense of purpose and determination but not the sense of urgency found in Qutb’s writings, “Therefore, ‘Where shall we begin?’ is an irrelevant question. One should ask, ‘Where shall we begin in our society?’ Our greatest and most pressing responsibility is to see, historically speaking, where the Muslim society is.”<sup>451</sup> In the Iran of Shariati, Muslim society was pinned down under the Shah, and by proxy, the West. In eloquent prose, Shariati writes, “The tragedy (in Iran) is that, on the one hand, those who have controlled our religion over the past two centuries have transformed it into its present and static form and, on the other hand, our enlightened people who understand the present age and the needs of our generation and our time, do not understand religion. As a result, our Islamic society, despite Islam with its rich culture and history which would have otherwise enabled it to emancipate itself, could not acquire the religious awareness necessary for its salvation.”<sup>452</sup> [SIC] With unabashed criticism of the clergy in Iran, Shariati feels Muslim society in Iran has reached an impasse. He seems to point the finger of blame at the clergy (at least in part) for holding back the learned people of historical times, particularly including Shariati’s time, in understanding religion. He goes further by stating, “However, whenever the enemy has clad itself in the attire of a friend and when polytheism and corruption have worn the robe of virtue and piety, then even at the apogee of its outward glory and in the outer grandeur of its rites and rituals, Islam has been

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<sup>450</sup> Shariati, Ali. *Where Shall We Begin?* From *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>451</sup> Shariati, Ali. *Where Shall We Begin?* From *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>452</sup> Shariati, Ali. *Where Shall We Begin?* From *Ibid.*, p. 21.

distorted from within. It has lost its truth and vitality and has sacrificed with its own sword the purest and the sincerest of its supporters and leaders.”<sup>453</sup> This is an obvious critique against the Shah pretending to be one of the people, especially when Reza Khan attached the name of Pahlavi to his family in attempt to legitimize his rule in 1924.<sup>454</sup> Shariati also wrote this to identify the US, who wore the robes of friendship, as being in league with the Shah. The last critique is reserved, again, for the clergy who in Shariati’s mind, should have known better. Their robes of ‘virtue and piety’ have been shed, and as a result, Islam has suffered an implacable wound. To Shariati, understanding Islam in relation to the contemporary age would have provided a stalwart against the ever-advancing West. Yet despite this inability or setback, Shariati quite interestingly has a strong belief in the authenticity of Iranian culture and Islam and more importantly in its resiliency when battling “the face of Western cultural onslaught.”<sup>455</sup>

Carrying on this theme of resiliency, Shariati’s writing starts to become more impassioned. He states that,

“In particular, the true and committed enlightened individuals of Eastern and non-European, and finally Muslim nations – which, more than anyone else, have been victimized by economic and, still more tragic, intellectual and moral colonization – observe and recognize that the modern exploitative order and the economy worshiping structure, along with the prevailing ‘base materialistic spirit’ and the ‘philosophy of consumerism’ which respectively constitute the ‘religion’ and ‘moral order’ of the existing economic system – equipped with the power of science, philosophy, technology, art, literature, sociology, history, and psychology, and armed with every means of making war, peace, and politics – utilize every possible trick and inhumane plan to transform countries the world over into market places for goods and products.”<sup>456</sup>

He follows this statement with an ardent and rapid-fire barrage of critiques aimed against the West: “In the face of colonialism, people have become monkey-like”; “...the hypocrisy of democracy and humanism (all of which have become the hirelings of the

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<sup>453</sup> Shariati, Ali. What Is To Be Done? From *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>454</sup> Ansari, Ali. Modern Iran Since 1921: The Pahlavis and After. London: Longman 2003 p. 36.

<sup>455</sup> Shariati, Ali. Where Shall We Begin? From What Is To Be Done? North Haledon, NJ: Islamic Publications International 1986 p. 26.

<sup>456</sup> Shariati, Ali. What Is To Be Done? From *Ibid.*, p. 29.

‘religion of money’ and the ‘philosophy of consumerism’); “...the leadership of the world imperialists, whose objective is collecting wealth.”<sup>457</sup> Clearly Shariati is gearing up for a massive diatribe against the influences of the West, particularly upon Muslim society not only in Iran but throughout the globe. With fever-pitched passion, he does so, stating of Western rulers,

“Their function is to dispense hand-picked and selected European thoughts and ideas, and disseminate the Western life-style, social relations, and moral behavioral patterns. The pseudo-intellectuals are supposed to make people ‘modern’ and assimilate the elites and the progressive and educated youth of non-European societies into European culture inside their own traditional societies and, hence, establish a base for Western penetration and arrival. Moreover, they may serve as a bridge for facilitating communication with the understanding of the strangers by the West. The ultimate result of this mission has been the cultural, political, and economic conquest of the invincible ‘fortress of fanaticism.’”<sup>458</sup>

For the purposes of this research, the most damning evidence that Shariati writes of the West comes when he chastises modern Muslim society for following the hollow example of the West as a moral compass. He states, “In Islamic countries today, as soon as our semi-intellectual youth reach the stage of reading newspapers or the stage of using European furniture, clothing, or cosmetics – particularly if they have studied some mathematics and biology – they deny God.”<sup>459</sup> As in fact Shariati believes that Muslim society is mirroring Western society, Shariati is following and fulfilling the Nietzschean model that the West has also denied God. He provides evidence of this thought of the West as God-less when he writes, “In the name of contemporary science, they announce that, from a scientific standpoint, the question of (the existence of) God has been totally answered in Europe!”<sup>460</sup> By this he clearly means that the European answer is no to the existence of God. By proxy, Shariati implies that the West is therefore God-less. In doing so he has provided legitimate evidence for the validation of the notion that when an

<sup>457</sup> Shariati, Ali. What Is To Be Done? From *Ibid.*, p. 31-32.

<sup>458</sup> Shariati, Ali. What Is To Be Done? From *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>459</sup> Shariati, Ali. What Is To Be Done? From *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>460</sup> Shariati, Ali. What Is To Be Done? From *Ibid.*, p. 33.

entity encounters the West, something is lost in that encounter; that something is God. It is with this sentiment in mind that Shariati asks with a sense of sincerity yet despondency, “How could the Western colonizer enter the Islamic land, penetrate the heart of its society, disturb the life of its followers and their traditional organizations, plunder their resources, turn their cities into markets, make Muslims hollow, absurd, worthless and inhumane imitators, without any serious consideration of the ‘danger of Islam’ that it had experienced in the past?”<sup>461</sup>

From this question, Shariati draws great resolve when positing an answer. There is a definite change in both language and tone in his answer, one that indicates the certainty of a plan come to fruition. He states, “All existing towers on this earth must fall, all the fortresses must crumble, all the strong barriers which resist the looting of the West must be taken away, and in short, all that which bestows a human society with superior character and with a solidified independence as well as all that which makes a society ready to defend its values vis-à-vis the surprise attacks of contemporary ‘civilized barbarism’ must either be eliminated or destroyed.”<sup>462</sup> Shariati feels as if modern Islamic society both in Iran and throughout the world has been cleaved in two by the West; one half is fraudulent and frozen while the other is empty and soul-less. This generation of Muslims is adrift and estranged from its cultural and spiritual roots, which anchored it with both a mass and an individual sense of unity and fortitude. It is what Shariati deems a “wandering generation” and wants it desperately to “return to itself, to its cultural heritage, to its historical and moral self, and to ‘self-awareness,’” for “returning to one’s self is the only hope which can enable the wandering generation to stand tall against the

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<sup>461</sup> Shariati, Ali. *What Is To Be Done?* From *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>462</sup> Shariati, Ali. *What Is To Be Done?* From *Ibid.*, p. 30.

intimidating monster of the West.”<sup>463</sup> In writing of a return to one’s self to combat the forces of the West, Shariati again picks up on the notion of something, in this case returning to something, indigenous to this ‘wandering generation.’ It is the answer to what has been plaguing Muslim society. In an incredibly important passage for this research and for the development of Islamic political thought, Shariati writes, “I am referring to the endless power of faith which is presently either buried and unknown, or wasted. When utilized, this energy will mobilize and inspire our history, spirit, civilization, thoughts and lives. What is needed is an intellectual revolution and an Islamic renaissance, a cultural and ideological movement based on the deepest foundations of our beliefs, equipped with the richest resources we possess. In a word, we need Islam.”<sup>464</sup>

Very much like Qutb, Shariati has arrived at a one-word answer, already in Muslim vocabulary, as the solution to the problem of the West: Islam. To defend themselves against the “ruthless aggression of imported Western values as well as their encroachment from all sides,” Muslim society must return to its roots.<sup>465</sup> But this will not be an easy task, as Sharaiti notes. The Islam that both Shariati and Qutb want to return to is as a historical pane of glass: dirtied and cracked over time so that the true Islam that is sought appears distorted to the modern observer. It is these layers that Shariati and Qutb implore Muslim society to look through and clean up to ascertain the true Islam that will be the foundation for social change. Towards this effect, Shariati writes, “We must initiate an ‘Islamic Resistance’... The ‘original Islam’ posed a logical, realistic and social outlook, and projected humane ideals. We must reintroduce this message, the message

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<sup>463</sup> Shariati, Ali. *What Is To Be Done?* From *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>464</sup> Shariati, Ali. *What Is To Be Done?* From *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>465</sup> Shariati, Ali. *What Is To Be Done?* From *Ibid.*, p. 54.

which immediately created a lasting and radical revolution in the withered, feeble and dark heart of the history of humanity...”<sup>466</sup> This solution that Shariati proposes begs an important question: what is the true, ‘original’ Islam that lies underneath all these historical layers? For Shariati the answer is the Quran, the Word of God for Muslims. For in the Quran, there is a prescription for rightly guided living, the straight path. If the Quran is paradigmatic in this manner, it is an easy transition to a governmental paradigm in Shariati’s mind. He writes, “To emancipate and guide the people, to give birth to a new love, faith, and dynamism, and to shed light on the people’s hearts and minds and make them aware of various elements of ignorance, superstition, cruelty, and degeneration in contemporary Islamic societies, an enlightened person should start with ‘religion.’ By that I mean our peculiar religious culture and not the one predominant today.”<sup>467</sup> To further specify ‘religion’ as law, and thereby Islam as law, Shariati begins to make an argument for the Quran as law; “the principle of equality of people would be held as binding not only before God but also before governments, not only in the hereafter but in this life as well...”<sup>468</sup> The tenets contained in Islam according to Shariati are “the powerful conscience and the strong binder of our people, and the foundation of our morality and spirituality, but also because it is the human ‘self’ of our people...”<sup>469</sup> To initiate the idea of the Quran as the basis for governmental paradigm, he uses language that includes not only the Muslims of Iran, but those of the global Ummah as

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<sup>466</sup> Shariati, Ali. What Is To Be Done? From *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>467</sup> Shariati, Ali. Where Shall We Begin? From *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>468</sup> Shariati, Ali. What Is To Be Done? From *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>469</sup> Shariati, Ali. What Is To Be Done? From *Ibid.*, p. 53.

well when he states, “We must take refuge in Islam, if only because it is a religion that transcends history and nationality.”<sup>470</sup>

The idea of transcendence is important language. He sees in Islam “the negation of all racial, ethnic, tribal, and traditional values and in establishing one giant human society (ummah) on the face of the earth which is based on economic and humane equality and on lofty and divine ideals. Thus, Islam can be presented as ‘ideology,’ ‘direction,’ ‘guidance,’ ‘faith,’ ‘spiritual interpretation of the world,’ and as an answer to the most fundamental questions the occupy the volatile soul of contemporary man.”<sup>471</sup>

[SIC] It is evident here that Shariati is building momentum toward reaching an answer to the previously posed question of what is original Islam. He makes the very important statement that the Quran should be used as the basis of law and government outright, as the Quran is Islam. He writes,

“As a common principle, we must all believe that in traditional societies with ‘unaware masses’ the primary responsibility of the enlightened individuals is to give awareness to their own people. Accordingly to provide an answer to the question ‘Where shall we begin?’ we propose the following slogan: ‘The rebirth of Islam.’ The question remains as to how can one achieve this rebirth of Islam. The answer is provided by Islam itself. It teaches its followers that whenever they lose their path in history, are divided into contentious sects in the darkness of centuries, or are scared and feel baffled in the sea of ideas, they should not stop marching, should not tolerate divisiveness and sectarianism, should not waste their energies. Instead they should return to the Quran.”<sup>472</sup> [SIC]

Shariati has reached the culmination of what he believes is the only argument for how to best defend Muslim society against the influence and encroachment of the West.<sup>473</sup> To recount Shariati’s previous idea, the use of Islam and the Quran is the endgame in the development of Islamic political thought in relation to the West.

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<sup>470</sup> Shariati, Ali. *What Is To Be Done?* From *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>471</sup> Shariati, Ali. *What Is To Be Done?* From *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>472</sup> Shariati, Ali. *What Is To Be Done?* From *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>473</sup> Perhaps somewhat contradictorily to his Islam as universal to all Muslim sects stance, he later writes on p. 66-67 that Muslims must return to the Quran as understood by Imam Ali, hence believing that Shi’ite Islam is the correct version of Islam to return to.

The next segment of What Is To Be Done? is entitled Surah al-Rum: A Message to the Enlightened Thinkers, and is Shariati's interpretation of Surah XXX of the Quran, al-Rum, as justification for the use of the Quran as a, or the, governmental paradigm. Though the specifics of how this is to be accomplished is outside the nature and scope of this research, the importance of the chapter for this research lies in the fact that Shariati considers the Quran to be timeless, and impervious to change. He writes that Muslims should rely upon the Quran for government because "To date, the Quran is the only document that has been safe from (major or minor) changes or distortions by the enemies of Islam."<sup>474</sup> Hence, while the world around it evolves, Shariati insists that the holy text has not been changed or corrupted over time. He writes that, "Nevertheless, the Quran, the word of Allah, remains constant throughout all reforms and evolutions. It is applicable to all times and places; irrespective of political, cultural, and social class, the Quran will lead to the freedom of every conscious individual."<sup>475</sup> And because God's word is timeless, Shariati feels it is pertinent to use as the ultimate guide for Muslims and the definitive defense against the West.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The inclusion of Shariati is important when tracing the development of Islamic political thought in the mid-twentieth century in relation to the West. Shariati is an important successor of Afghani's in that Shariati, like Qutb, developed Afghani's appeal for solidarity among Muslims to defend against the West and Westernization as he saw it trespassing into Muslim lands, Islamic civil society, and the Islamic moral economy.

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<sup>474</sup> Shariati, Ali. Surah al-Rum: A Message to the Enlightened Thinkers From Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>475</sup> Shariati, Ali. Surah al-Rum: A Message to the Enlightened Thinkers From Ibid., p. 74.

Again, like Qutb, Shariati labeled the West as *the* enemy of Islam par excellence. In doing so, Shariati honed the focal point of Afghani's pan-Islam around unification upon a common enemy to all denominations of Islam.

Shariati traveled to, and experienced, the West (in his case Europe) on a first-hand basis. It is from a unique position within Shi'i Islam that Shariati was able to formulate ideas and construct arguments for the interaction and dissemination of his anti-Western ideas based upon his experience. It is the development of these ideas which would aid in furthering Islamic political thought in the mid-twentieth century, particularly in relation to the West.

This research demonstrated that Western intellectuals' ideas pervaded Shariati's own body of thought. He was able to use and develop these ideas into an argument which criticized the West and Westernization as he saw it, and by doing this, sought the enactment of change in Islamic civil society and in the Islamic moral economy. Shariati therefore reacted severely against Westernization based upon his experience in the West, and the effect he believed Westernization was having upon the decline of global Ummah in the above areas. Shariati's ideas and writings utilized a partial Nietzschean outlook; namely that when an entity (in this research Islam) encounters the West, something (in this research, God) is lost in that encounter. Therefore Shariati was able to express in a very real manner that the West was God-less, and that Islam, through Westernization as he saw it, was also becoming God-less. This was affecting both Islamic civil society and the Islamic moral economy in a negative manner. Finally, Shariati wanted to offset the loss of God in Islamic civil society and the Islamic moral economy while simultaneously halting the influence of Westernization by utilizing political means. Shariati argued that

he wanted to use Islam, particularly the Quran, as the political means of solving the problems faced by the global Ummah created, he believed, at the hands of the West. The Quran should be used as law, he argued. This would hence restore God to Islamic civil society and the Islamic moral economy permanently.

Shariati's ideas as argued in this research reveal that he, like Qutb, wanted to enact change within Islamic civil society and reconstruct the Islamic moral economy. It again signals that Islam for Shariati was simultaneously public and personal. His writings also suggest a tone of urgency and certainty of purpose. An authentic sense of concern for his fellow Muslims also resonates from his anti-Western corpus of thought. Like Qutb, Shariati's specific ideas, thought, and actions have validated the arguments set forth in this research. But unlike Qutb, Shariati's perspective, importantly, is a Shi'a one. It has also shown why Shariati is important regarding the development of Islamic political thought in the mid-twentieth century in relation to the West. First, Shariati identified the West as Islam's enemy, without exception. Second, believing the West to be God-less, he sought the use of Islam and the Quran as the political solution to the problem(s) the West and Westernization posed upon Islam. Third, Shariati was a major modern illustration of someone who endeavored to enact change within Islamic civil society and the Islamic moral economy. Fourth, and perhaps most important, Shariati reacted this way in response to the West, particularly his first-hand encounter and the circumstances of this encounter with the West. It was these sentiments that furthered the development of Islamic political thought in the mid-twentieth century, most significantly in relation to the West. These notions are something that Qutb's and Shariati's intellectual descendants would identify and develop further.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Confronting the “Government Ration Eaters”: Jalal Al-e Ahmad and the Development of Islamic Political Thought in Relation to the West<sup>476</sup>**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will center on the development of Jalal Al-e Ahmad's anti-Western rhetoric in developing the course of Islamic political thought from the mid 1940's until the early 1960's. Though Al-e Ahmad is slightly older than Shariati, the period when Al-e Ahmad was politically and literarily active is an enormously important time for the relationship between the Ummah and the West. In this regard, he is a useful compliment to Shariati in this research because Al-e Ahmad's writings and memories extend further back than do those of Shariati. Whereas Shariati's writings and activities primarily witnessed the declining years of Muhammad Reza Shah's unyielding clutch on Iran, Al-e Ahmad was not alive to see the reaction of Iran's people, which eventually led to revolution. Rather, Al-e Ahmad was more attuned to events such as the Allied occupation of Iran, Mossadeq's government, and lingering sentiments of the Constitutional Revolution. Not that Shariati was unfamiliar with these events, but they seem to have had more effect upon Al-e Ahmad's thoughts and writings than they did for Shariati. Hence, while the history of Iran at the end of the Pahlavi period is closely intertwined with Shariati's life and thought, the middle of the Pahlavi period is more relevant to Al-e Ahmad's. As such, this history will be presented as necessary through the development of Al-e Ahmad's anti-Western thought, but as with the previous case

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<sup>476</sup> Al-e Ahmad uses the term 'government ration-eaters' in The School Principle to refer to Iranian educational system employees, but also primarily as a metaphor for Iranians who are West-struck and content to follow the status quo under the Shah.

study individuals, the highlights of this research will be on Al-e Ahmad's thought.

Within this particular area, Al-e Ahmad aided in laying the foundation for this ideology to be used, along with Shariati's, as an anchor for change in civil society. That societal change came in the form of the 1979 Revolution, ten years after Al-e Ahmad's death.

Using Al-e Ahmad in examining the development of Islamic political thought in relation to the West is imperative. Al-e Ahmad draws on and continues the work of both Qutb and Shariati. Despite the differing circumstances of the encounter with the West, more so between Qutb and Al-e Ahmad than between Shariati and Al-e Ahmad, there are core similarities in the rhetoric they all have produced, particularly in the identification of a common enemy: the West. Unification around the solution to this problem is something that Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad desired for the global Ummah. There is direct written evidence by both Al-e Ahmad and Shariati, who were for all intents and purposes contemporaries, that they had met and were influenced by each other and were even sympathetic and apologetic towards each other's work. This is an important point in that it reveals a continuity of thought between them. It is also an important point because, as author Ali Gheissari notes, it re-enforced the idea that both written and spoken words "involving a particular approach to reality," continued to be used as a guiding light to inspire the people.<sup>477</sup> Hamid Dabashi takes this sentiment one step further, believing that for Al-e Ahmad there was an "equally sublimated sense of 'obligation.'"<sup>478</sup> This 'obligation' leads Dabashi to summarize Al-e Ahmad's life;

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<sup>477</sup> Ghessari, Ali. Iranian Intellectuals in the Twentieth Century. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1998 p. 14.

<sup>478</sup> Dabashi, Hamid. Theology of Discontent. London: Transaction Publishers 2006, p. 40.

“Speaking for generations of betrayed hopes and against the overwhelming indignities of his own time, Al-e Ahmad simply said ‘No.’”<sup>479</sup>

The research presented in this chapter will investigate Al-e Ahmad’s works in which he developed his anti-Western rhetoric. Like Qutb, Al-e Ahmad has written an auto-biography that will be utilized to search for early influences that contributed to his anti-Western stance and ideas. Importantly, though, this research asserts that his time in the West was of critical importance for the development of his anti-Western thought. In this chapter, then, this research will argue that Al-e Ahmad relied upon Western intellectual ideas from Marx, Engels, Foucault, and Gramsci to construct arguments against aspects of orientalism, and bring about change within Islamic civil society. He would also use these ideas to formulate a general denigration of the West. Al-e Ahmad, this research further argues, uses Nietzsche’s idea that the West was/ is Godless to describe the West and argue against Westernization. Westernization, as he saw it, was responsible for the loss of God in, and the erosion of, Islamic civil society and the Islamic moral economy. This chapter argues that he also uses these ideas to postulate a solution to the Ummah’s predicament resulting from the influence of the West: the Quran as a method of governance so that God would permanently be a part of the Ummah. By doing so, he wished to bring about change within Islamic civil society while defending the Islamic moral economy from the caustic influences of the West.

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<sup>479</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

### Life and Background

Jalal Al-e Ahmad was born in 1923 in Tehran, Iran into a respected Shi'ite family. He was the first-born son after seven girls, only four of whom survived.<sup>480</sup> Despite this, he relates that his childhood was lived in “aristocratic religious affluence.”<sup>481</sup> After completing elementary school, Al-e Ahmad’s father sent him to work in the bazaar. He did this, but simultaneously registered for classes at Darolfonun, which had recently begun night classes. Al-e Ahmad relates that he would spend days doing mechanical and electrical repairs, as well as the selling of goods, and spend his nights in school. With the money he earned from working in the bazaar, he was able to put himself through high school, graduating in 1943. As he himself admits, upon his graduation he was “handed over to the confusions of World War II. A war that for us had no killing and destruction and bombs. But it had famine and typhus and chaos, and the painful presence of occupation forces.”<sup>482</sup> This is a very important statement by Al-e Ahmad, as it reveals the first time that he has encountered the West as a young man was a ‘painful’ one. It seems to have brought, by his account, disease and chaos; themes that he would later expound upon in his writings regarding the West.<sup>483</sup> In 1946, Al-e Ahmad graduated from the Faculty of Arts and Letters at the Teachers Training College. Yet in the intervening years, he writes that a rift had developed between he and his family, and that he had broken away from them. This was primarily due to his entrance into the political realm when he joined the Tudeh party in 1943.

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<sup>480</sup> Al-e Ahmad, Jalal An Autobiography of Sorts from Hillman, Michael C. ed. Iranian Society: An Anthology of Writings by Jalal Al-e Ahmad. Lexington, KY: Mazda Publishers 1982 p. 14.

<sup>481</sup> Ibid. p. 14.

<sup>482</sup> Ibid. p. 14.

<sup>483</sup> Dabashi offers an excellent discussion and history of Al-e Ahmad during WWII in Theology of Discontent, p. 43-45.

During his four years as a member of the Tudeh party, he relates that he “rose from being a simple member to membership on the Tehran Central Committee.”<sup>484</sup> During this time Al-e Ahmad did a fair amount of publishing for the party monthly Mardom. However, the Tudeh party suffered a schism as a result of differing ideologies about how the party should be run internally. In the later Fall of 1947, Al-e Ahmad writes, “As a consequence of this difference of opinion between a group that we constituted lead by Khalil Maleki and party leaders who because of the defeat on the Azerbayjan issue no longer controlled the general context of Party thought. And for this reason they followed Stalinist policies that we saw the results of.”<sup>485</sup> It is worth noting that Maleki was educated in Germany and was a social democrat, imprisoned by Reza Shah in 1937 along with several other Marxists during a crackdown of radicalism.<sup>486</sup> An attempt to form a splinter Tudeh party with Maleki did not yield the political fruits Al-e Ahmad anticipated, and this group was soon disbanded. This essentially ended Al-e Ahmad’s formal political career, and he claimed he had lost faith in all party politics from that point forward.<sup>487</sup> After a period of what he refers to as “forced silence,” during which he produced a plethora of both fictional and semi-autobiographical works railing against the government of the Shah, he began working for the Iranian Ministry of Education from roughly 1962 until roughly 1966. It was also during this time that he embarked on a second period of anti-Western writing which would occupy the rest of his life, and for which he was most noted.

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<sup>484</sup> Al-e Ahmad, Jalal An Autobiography of Sorts from Hillman, Michael C. ed. Iranian Society: An Anthology of Writings by Jalal Al-e Ahmad. Lexington, KY: Mazda Publishers 1982 p. 14.

<sup>485</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>486</sup> Mottahedeh, Roy The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran. Oxford: Oneworld 1985 p. 289.

<sup>487</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 294.

### Writings

Much of the writing that Jalal Al-e Ahmad produced over his lifetime was fiction oriented. However, this fiction was embedded with elements taken from his own life, and is, though categorized as fiction, often autobiographical. His writing in this regard is also heavily allegorical. In other words, there were not just morals behind the tales, but the stories were often depicting some aspect of Iranian history during the reign of Muhammad Reza Shah; most of them negative. Additionally, he was in a unique position among Iranian writers of his time in that he had been able to travel during his lifetime, both throughout Iran and also the West. For the purposes of this research, it is extremely important to take note of his travels and experiences outside of Iran, particularly in the West. As a result, in his writings he was able to offer “a realistic understanding of the diversified masses of people and their valid and legitimate cultural frames of reference.”<sup>488</sup> This also held true for Muslims political frames of reference as well. In 1957, he travelled to France and England; in 1962 to France, Switzerland, West Germany, Holland, and England; 1962 and 1963 to Israel; 1964 to Mecca; 1965 to the US at Harvard University upon invitation from Henry Kissinger’s international scholars program. Much of what he would write in his anti-Western rhetoric in his short stories and his full length books was derived from the dual experiences of traveling and experiencing the West, and living under an oppressive regime controlled by the West. It is also of great interest that the publication of his anti-Western books largely coincide with his various returns from traveling in the West, thus generating a pattern that would continue throughout his life. In doing so, he continually added harsh critiques of the West to the ever-expanding Islamic repertoire of anti-Western rhetoric.

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<sup>488</sup> Dabashi, Hamid. Theology of Discontent. London: Transaction Publishers 2006, p. 65.

Al-e Ahmad was a popular writer because he wrote in a style that was fluid, engaging, and easily understandable. He was actually even considered to be the most original author of Persian short stories to surface in the post World War II period.<sup>489</sup> The immediate yet detached style with which he penned his works represented a new direction in Persian literature, and as a result his Iranian audience was able to fully comprehend the life stories and allegories he depicts.<sup>490</sup> Author Roy Mottahedeh also adeptly notes that Al-e Ahmad was “one of the first Iranians to sense and express an even deeper weakness of the Iranian left: its distance from the masses.”<sup>491</sup> It is within these stories that the initial anti-Western rhetoric of Al-e Ahmad surfaces. For the purpose of this research, a selection of Al-e Ahmad’s short stories followed by several books will be examined, tracing the development of his anti-Western stance.

### Short Stories and Allegories

#### *My Sister and the Spider*

Al-e Ahmad’s story *My Sister and the Spider* was a short story that was first published in the October/November 1961 edition of *Arash*, (upon his return from France, England, Switzerland, West Germany, and Holland) and later reprinted posthumously in *Panj Dashtan* in 1971. The publication that appeared in *Arash* came immediately after his first known travels to the West, which included France, England, Switzerland, West Germany, and Holland. The reprint in *Panj Dashtan* came after all of his Western experiences, and indeed two years after his death. *My Sister and the Spider* is a

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<sup>489</sup> Mottahedeh, Roy The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran. Oxford: Oneworld 1985 p. 290.

<sup>490</sup> Ibid., p. 291. Dabashi also indicates that Al-e Ahmad’s writing style gave him a sense of credibility and genuine honesty in Theology of Discontent, p. 51.

<sup>491</sup> Ibid., p. 308.

transparent autobiographical story narrated by Al-e Ahmad as a child and is essentially, according to historian Michael Hillman, a social commentary and representation of the oil crisis of the early 1950's. The sister character in the story is made to represent the people of Iran, or even possibly Mossadeq's government, abandoned and maltreated by the Tudeh party, the bazaar merchants, the clergy, and most importantly, the West.<sup>492</sup>

The story is about a boy whose married sister has become ill. She has become bed-ridden in her family's household, where her husband visits her. While trying to comprehend and cope with his sister's illness, the boy spends time with her in her room and notices a spider ensconced in a corner of the window, which he dwells upon often, until the climax of the story when he sister eventually passes away. Upon first sighting the spider, he writes, "How had I failed to notice such a large spider before? I, who knew even the smallest ant hole, and was aware of when all the mice gave birth."<sup>493</sup> Clearly, Al-e Ahmad is relating to the audience that he, though his character is a young boy named Abbas, was an intellectually conscious individual, aware of current and historical events. His question reveals that many, including himself as an alert intellectual, may have been unconsciously blind to what was happening governmentally to their country. Upon a conversation where the boy's brother-in-law asks what the boy was doing while attempting to strike the spider, he replies, "Well – I wanted to kill this filth."<sup>494</sup> [SIC] He goes on to say of the spider that, "This filth has wormed his way into our house."<sup>495</sup> Al-e Ahmad is trying to indicate his feelings on the how the West has infiltrated Iran and

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<sup>492</sup> Hillman, Michael C. ed. Iranian Society: An Anthology of Writings by Jalal Al-e Ahmad. Lexington, KY: Mazda Publishers 1982, p. 20.

<sup>493</sup> Al-e Ahmad, Jalal My Sister and the Spider from Hillman, Michael C. ed. Iranian Society: An Anthology of Writings by Jalal Al-e Ahmad. Lexington, KY: Mazda Publishers 1982 p. 21.

<sup>494</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

influenced its people. Al-e Ahmad seems to also have a greater universal concern for the infiltration of the West into other societies, as he writes,

“Take me – do I like my brother-in-law? It’s true, I don’t like flies either, but I wouldn’t want even one fly in the whole world to fall into any spider’s web...But whenever I’ve seen one of these very flies trapped in a spider’s web, I’ve not only freed it straight away but I’ve knocked down the spider, his nest and web as well. The problem is that when you release the flies which have been caught in the spider’s web, they are no good any more. Perhaps that’s why I don’t like spiders. When the fly is caught, it makes kind of a muffled buzzing. As if the noise comes from the bottom of its throat. It makes no difference being caught by ants or in the fingers of someone like – who traps its legs and lets it helplessly flap its wings. But whenever it’s caught in the spiders web it’s as though its voice is still more muffled. As if the spiders close the mouth of the fly so it can’t call for help.”<sup>496</sup>

He follows this sentiment up by writing,

“The fly is safe and secure in the air when suddenly he’s caught in the web. Just like a small ball in volleyball net. Perhaps it doesn’t see or it’s confused, or pre-occupied. Indeed, is it possible to see the spider’s web? It’s so fine. Sometimes I don’t see it myself. Then before it can do anything, the spider is there like suspended death. The trouble is that the flies don’t take it seriously at first. I’ve noticed. They don’t even make any noise. They shift about for a bit, and as soon as one of their wings or some of their legs are trapped and the spider has appeared, then they make a noise. If they spoke out sooner, perhaps someone like me would appear and come to their help. But the problem is that when the flies cry out, it’s too late...”<sup>497</sup>

Al-e Ahmad is alluding here to the lure and influence of the West upon the government of Iran, but more importantly upon the people of Iran. Just like he has previously described of himself, the general populace seems to be pre-occupied and not notice what is happening around them. Perhaps it is an inability to project what will happen in the future at the appearance of the spider, i.e. the West. Or perhaps it is simply out-with the realm of comprehension of the common people, and hence the need for Al-e Ahmad to say that if the people had cried out earlier, an intellectual like himself could have attempted to analyze the situation and make a recommendation as to a course of action to follow. This sentiment rings with the echoes of Qutb accusing the Ummah of being lazy, and therefore susceptible to the influences of the West.

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<sup>496</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24-25.

<sup>497</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

The final aspect of interest for this research in the story is the fact that Abbas's sister eventually succumbs to her illness, which the audience is told is cancer. Ale-Ahmad writes, "I was busy eating when I heard, 'It's getting a grip on her like a spider. Well, Khambaji, it's not called cancer for nothing.'"<sup>498</sup> It is interesting that Al-e Ahmad would choose this illness to inflict one of his characters with, as this is the language and metaphor in which he would, in later works, refer to the West. The implication is that to be infected by the perceived values of Westernization is to suffer an agonizing illness until there is a complete transformation, and metaphorically, one is dead to their previous self and values. This upsets Abbas to such a degree that his last action in the story is to return to his sister's room where "the same spider was still sitting in the corner of the window with its web and small balls of flies corpses, as if nothing had happened. I was so angry that I took off my shoe and threw it at it. I threw it so hard that I broke the top glass."<sup>499</sup>

### The China Flowerpot

The China Flowerpot appeared in the 1946 collection of stories by Al-e Ahmad entitled Exchange of Visits. At the time this research was written, no information as to the reference of the title was discernable, hence disrupting the previously mentioned pattern of Western travel, then anti-Western publication. However, the date of publication is still an important factor concerning the relationship between Al-e Ahmad and the West. He had already written of the 'painful' experience of WWII and the occupying forces in Iran as his first encounter with the West. By 1946, the first year after the war, the effect of these experiences upon Al-e Ahmad's ideas would still have been

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<sup>498</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>499</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

very fresh. This was also the time that the Tudeh party, of which Al-e Ahmad was a member, was undergoing an internal ideological schism. The result of this rift was his eventual loss of confidence in the party as viable political resistance to the Shah's regime, and therefore as viable political resistance to the West. Though The China Flowerpot was not written upon return from one of Al-e Ahmad's many travels to the West, it was written on the heels of formative experiences for Al-e Ahmad's ideas regarding the West. In this manner, the anti-Western tone contained in the work is accounted for. As Michael Hillman notes, once again this story offers a social commentary following the initial theme presented in My Sister and the Spider, namely the recognition of a catalyst and a responsibility for one's actions both as spectators and participants.

The premise to the story is a very simple one. A man has boarded a bus for a journey with a flowerpot that is, in reality, of great value to him though he is quite cavalier to tell when asked that it is of no special significance. He takes great care to handle it delicately and gently. The passenger seated next to him suddenly asks if he may examine the flowerpot more closely and hold it. Reluctantly the owner hands the flowerpot over to his neighbor who begins a thorough examination of the object. As the bus turned around a corner, the flowerpot slips from the neighbor's grasp and falls to the floor, shattering into pieces. The owner is livid at the event, while the neighbor is rather nonchalant about it. He says to the owner, "The vase just broke. That's all. It was just one of those things."<sup>500</sup> Yet the owner remains incensed. Other passengers on the bus each weigh in with their own opinions on the matter, but the owner cries out, "'I thought

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<sup>500</sup> Al-e Ahmad, Jalal The China Flowerpot from Hillman, Michael C. ed. Iranian Society: An Anthology of Writings by Jalal Al-e Ahmad. Lexington, KY: Mazda Publishers 1982 p. 45.

I was being neighborly. We're a nation worth nothing. And now that the vase is broken, he says it was fate. He thinks I'm going to let him go. Well, I'm going to collect the last penny of the price of the vase. You'd think money was hay. I buy a vase. You break it. Then you say 'Have it fixed.' You spastic. What's an antique to you? You haven't even the brains to look at one. Of course, I'm a fool for treating a lumox like him with kindness."<sup>501</sup> The owner disembarks at a particular stop to go to the nearby police station and file a complaint, when the bus driver decides to drive away, stating that the incident was none of his business.

The obvious point of interest in the story for this research is the breaking of the flowerpot and both the owner's and neighbor's reaction. Al-e Ahmad clearly intends the owner to represent the Iran of old, free of any Western influences. As the owner believes that the flowerpot is an antique, so allegorically is Iranian society, culture, religion, and politics. For Al-e Ahmad, it is clearly something of immense value and importance. It is its own entity, free of Western corruption. The breaking of the flowerpot is meant to represent the destruction of Iran's society, etc. as mentioned above at the hands of the West. Here the West is characterized as value-less, materialistic, and un-attentive to the potential repercussions of its actions. In this particular case, it is representative of both US and British involvement in Iranian government and as Al-e Ahmad would later write about, oil.

The owner of the flowerpot is upset with the neighbors reaction to what has happened, indicating a clash between the old and the new, or more aptly, a dichotomy between those who follow the West (and who are Weststruck to borrow Al-e Ahmad's phrase) and those who want Iran to remain free of Western influence. In reference to My

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<sup>501</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

Sister and the Spider, Al-e Ahmad wishes his audience to again see that it is the neighbor who is meant to be ‘pre-occupied’ or blind to the fact that the West, in his mind, is slowly draining Iran of its native character. And perhaps what is worse, that the neighbor is indifferent to this happening. As a result, the owner of the flowerpot is prompted to say, “We’re a nation worth nothing.”<sup>502</sup> This statement is meant to indicate that Al-e Ahmad does not have much faith in the common people who have been influenced by the West. The situation in Iran during the life of Al-e Ahmad has reached, he believed, such a desperate state that he is prompted to write these lines with passion and vigor. Interestingly, it is not something that went unnoticed in the revolution that would follow ten years after his death.

### Allegorical Books

#### The School Principal

One of the first books in which Al-e Ahmad depicts the influence of the West upon Iran in allegorical fashion is his 1958 work entitled The School Principal. This work was published only one year after his first known trip to the West: France and England. Though this work was written well before he began his tenure in the Iranian Ministry of Education, it nevertheless highlights one of Al-e Ahmad’s central themes about Iran coming under the influence of the West. Therefore it is not surprising that this book was written shortly upon his first return from the West. Al-e Ahmad believed that one of the ways of spreading Western influence in Iran was through education. As Michael Hillman writes in Al-e Ahmad’s Fictional Legacy from the journal Iranian

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<sup>502</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

Studies, “As a portrayal and indictment of negative aspects of the Iranian government educational system at the local and elementary level, The School Principal holds a special place in contemporary Persian fiction by virtue of its then unprecedented direct, uncompromising realism and force in its presentation of a specific contemporary problem involving explicit social criticism, with the portrayal couched in prose of appropriate directness, vigor, and informality.”<sup>503</sup> Though not often well received as a work of ‘fiction’ due to the lack of sustainable character development, it is highly revered as a social commentary, precisely because it sacrificed such development, “for the force of its critical intent.”<sup>504</sup>

Traditional educational styles and curriculum in Iran during the Pahlavi era seem, according to Al-e Ahmad, to have given way to Western styles and ideas about education. The worry for Al-e Ahmad was that these Western ideas that replaced the traditional Iranian ones were being passed on to Iran’s youth, forming an indelible impression upon them and creating a Western foundation of thought in their minds. They would grow up, then, as more Western than traditional Iranian. In the process, they would be blinded to the indigenous heritage of Iran. Another worry of Al-e Ahmad’s is the teachers who would carry out such a transformation under the guise and blessing of the Iranian Ministry of Education, and more importantly, himself as a headmaster of a school. Perhaps most distressing is the fact that Al-e Ahmad would be essentially powerless to change this course of education, even as the principal in the story (written in first person), as he was subject to the scrutiny and constraints of the Ministry of Education.

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<sup>503</sup> Hillman, Michael C. Al-e Ahmad’s Fictional Legacy from Iranian Studies Vol. 9, No. 4 Autumn 1976, p. 249.

<sup>504</sup> Ibid., p. 251.

As mentioned previously, Al-e Ahmad believed that one of the ways of spreading the influence of the West to upcoming generations of Iranians was through the Iranian educational system. This consequently destroyed his hope that it was the educational system in Iran which provided the last bastion of defense against the West and the preservation of traditional Iranian values, etc. This research will focus upon those aspects relating to the anti-Western rhetoric Al-e Ahmad developed throughout this particular work rather than giving a piece by piece review of the work itself as a piece of literature. The first evidence that can be seen of Al-e Ahmad's views in this regard comes when he states, "Of course, I was utterly nauseated with teaching; ten years of teaching abc's to the blank, gaping faces of the people's children, all of it the stupidest nonsense you can possibly imagine."<sup>505</sup> He further goes on to state that under the Ministry of Education, "I realized I was turning into a donkey."<sup>506</sup> Rather than being a simple tool, wielded at will, he chooses to become a principal of a school instead, in the hopes that he can at least have some say, albeit a minor one, in the hiring of teachers and the formation of curriculum. The school to which he is assigned to is a rural one, newly built by a wealthy philanthropist. Upon reaching the school for the first time, he relates, "The school's sign was a beauty, large and legible. From 150 meters away it screamed out the motto 'Power is...whatever you want it to be,' with the national symbol of the lion standing up there on three legs, trying to maintain his balance, with joined eyebrows, sword in hand, and lady sun riding piggyback. A stone's throw from the school on all

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<sup>505</sup> Al-e Ahmad, Jalal The School Principal. Minneapolis, MN: Bibliotheca Islamica 1974, p. 36. The story itself is told from a first person point of view, that of the principal, who obviously serves as Al-e Ahmad's mouthpiece, as the work is written from a first person point of view.

<sup>506</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

sides was the desert – limitless, waterless, and desolate.”<sup>507</sup> The imagery presented here is interesting in that it represents in the motto and the lion symbols of learning which are contrasted by the emptiness of the Western world represented by the desert.

Al-e Ahmad relates that there was no spark in the teachers to inspire their students. This was a massive problem in his eyes. He writes of the teacher corps, “There being no arrangements for tea or anything, during the fifteen minute breaks, they simply gathered together in the office and showed one another that once again they had survived yet another class unscathed. And then it started all over again. This could not continue.”<sup>508</sup> Clearly, the teachers at the school, supplied by the Ministry of education, were lackluster in the eyes of the principal, and hence Al-e Ahmad. This can easily be translated into an uninspiring performance in the classroom, moulding the minds of Iranian youth that Al-e Ahmad cared so much for. He continues, “If in all my ten years of experience I had learned one thing, it was that if teachers can’t relax and joke during the fifteen minute recesses, they’ll certainly take it out on the children during the class hour, and that if they can’t relieve themselves of the burden of teaching through the exchange of wisecracks, surely they will consequently fall asleep in the classroom.”<sup>509</sup>

Part of this unenthusiastic aura Al-e Ahmad notes come from how much the world has changed since the time when he himself was a schoolboy. He states, “My mind went back to those days when I was at this same level in school and we were drawing maps. I saw just how lucky we had been, we children of twenty or thirty years ago. For the maps we used to draw, we’d only needed two or three colors for all of Asia, Africa, and Australia. We used to use brown for the English to cover half of all Asia and

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<sup>507</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>508</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

Africa, and pin for the French in the other half of the world, and green, or I can't remember, maybe it was blue, for Holland and the others. Now...wow!"<sup>510</sup> Even as a youth, perhaps without realizing it, Al-e Ahmad, through the principal's comments, has depicted a world of colonialist influences by the West. This is an extremely important point. By the time that this story takes place, the colonial influences of the West had generally started to wane, as their grip was lost on these countries for various reasons, and the consequences of what colonial rule had meant and done began to surface, generating in its wake a significant amount of anger. This historical lesson is one that could not escape the principal and his teaching staff. It could possibly present an opportunity to enlighten the students, young though they may be, as to their own futures should they not choose to realize their current situation, and ultimately, to act. This lesson, though, may prove difficult, as the principal eventually learns that many of the parents or guardians of many of the students were illiterate agricultural workers.<sup>511</sup> However, it is interesting to note the observation that Al-e Ahmad makes of the children; "learning was their sole road to salvation. The fathers of most of them were either illiterate farmers or gardeners – undoubtedly prolific progenitors all, and hence overburdened with offspring."<sup>512</sup> In this observation, Al-e Ahmad actually answers his own question of why the children were so eager to come to school. When the principal states, "certainly it wasn't for love of their lessons," perhaps Al-e Ahmad's bias against the Iranian system of education, and thereby the Ministry of Education, shines through.

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<sup>510</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>511</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50. In later works, Al-e Ahmad either through characters in books or in his own name would be critical of those who would move into the cities for work at the hands of the West (the machines), essentially saying that this movement destroyed the traditional fabric of Iranian society, which was based in the countryside.

<sup>512</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

Later on in the work, he states, “Public servant! Damn the whole business!”<sup>513</sup> He uses terms throughout the work to vent his frustration at the educational system and its employees such as “government salary-taker” and “government ration-eaters,” of which “the largest figure of all on the school’s salary list belonged to me. It stood out as the biggest sin on Judgment Day.”<sup>514</sup>

Into the minds of these students, lessons were delivered by teachers of varying backgrounds. One of which was very westernized. Al-e Ahmad writes,

“When I got closer, I could hear that he was even whistling. It was one of those European dance tunes. Undoubtedly, he had been able to see me from this distance. I could even see the big anchor on his tie, battening it down so it wouldn’t shake. I thought to myself, ‘He probably only owns this one tie.’ But the ingrate kept coming with such a swaggering strut that I realized there was no possible way for me to simply let the matter drop. He didn’t pay me the heed he’d pay a dog. I was just about to blow my top, when I sensed a change in his movements. He began to hurry. Buttoning up his coat, he fixed his eyes on me. He seemed to nod his head. ‘Well,’ I thought to myself, ‘this time it turned out okay. But, if it hadn’t, God only knows what might have happened.’”<sup>515</sup>

Again, Al-e Ahmad later returns his principal to his educational past for a comparison to the teachers of today. Upset with the blind imitation of the West, he writes, “Oh, how the teachers of my schoolboy era were missed. What a crowd they had been. Anonymous, unknown characters, each one with a silver tongue and his own unique set of mannerisms. And now these young dandies – a bunch of harmless camp followers for those Europhiles among us who worshipped everything Western.”<sup>516</sup> Education, as a means of molding and shaping the future generation of Iranians to perhaps be independent thinkers, has now also come under the sway of the West in Al-e Ahmad’s mind. It is not surprising, then, that he longs for the days when this was not so: the days of his childhood. And it is also not completely surprising that he would be critical of the

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<sup>513</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>514</sup> *Ibid.*, pgs. 83, 96, 83.

<sup>515</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

educational system of his adult life, one that he has dedicated many years to, and sought to influence and even change. He seems to recognize that these new teachers will effect the future generation of school children. He writes that, ‘How fortunate the children of this generation. They have handcrafts, they have civics, and best of all, they have deportment which is in the hands of the school principles and requires no studying and no midnight oil whatsoever. All you need to know is how to bow and obey.’<sup>517</sup> In this fashion, the rote imitation of the West will be passed on to the next generation, something which distresses Al-e Ahmad incalculably.

It is interesting to note, however, the contrast and even the feelings of confusion that the principal portrays towards the juxtaposition of both the old methods of schooling and the new ones. Clearly, he is not particularly impressed with one of the teachers in his modern dress, attitude, and almost nonchalant attitude towards the principal; he even sarcastically refers to the teaching profession, and the teachers at his school, as ‘the vanguard of the honorable citizens of the future.’<sup>518</sup> However, on two separate occasions, the principal intervenes on the students’ behalf from potential disciplinary action dispensed by the nazem, even though the principal admits that he himself was unaware of what possible offense the school children had committed.

On one particular occasion, the Fourth Grade Teacher is struck by a car and is severely injured. He must be taken to the hospital. This event draws the ire of the principal when he learns the teacher was struck by an American driving a Western car, as the American had moved to the town to bring water pipelines and electrical infrastructure there. The principal goes to great lengths to reach the hospital and visit the teacher, only

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<sup>517</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>518</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

to find out that there are restrictions on visiting hours, and he is too late. As a result, he must disguise himself to gain admittance. With strikingly clear umbrage, Al-e Ahmad writes, “Others build houses that they might collect their rent money in dollars; the fourth grade teacher in my school gets run over by their foreign tenants; and I at this time of night, need a disguise in order to visit the poor devil. And I could do nothing about any of it.”<sup>519</sup> In another passage, Al-e Ahmad continues this anti-Western sentiment when he writes of the principal’s thoughts: “Didn’t you know that streets and traffic lights and civilization and pavement all belong to those who, in cars built in their own country, trample the rest of the world? Oh why, oh why did you have to have an accident?”<sup>520</sup> Al-e Ahmad then has the principal launch into a diatribe of rapprochement, where he questions his own self-worth and the worthiness of his work. Most importantly, he is enraged that he could not fend off the West from infiltrating Iran. Al-e Ahmad writes,

“My mind drifted: ‘You earned your daily bread by putting every ounce of your energy, along with all the nonsense you could muster, into sowing seeds for the future. Now witness the fruits of your labor. You have eyes, idiot!? Do you see a single trace of your influence on this man? Look at the marks of the movie industry on his forehead? You were carried away by your illusions. You flattered yourself. Okay. Suppose you had been right. Tell me, now, after ten years, do you still have seeds left to sow? To scatter? Huh? Don’t you think that now you are just like this flattened out carcass? All you have left is the trace of a bitter smile painted across your face. You’ve fallen to a point where now you’re under the subjugation of yesterday’s children. Is that you who is stretched out on this bed? For ten full years, with every passing moment, the minutes and the hours of your life have ticked away and moved up the staircase of life. All you have to show for it is the weariness of the load lingering in your body. This strutting bantam rooster and all the other young cocks whom you don’t know were hatched from eggs you once nurtured, eggs which have long since been cracked open and left empty. And now, wherever you look, not a single trace remains, not a cracked shell or even a feather...’”<sup>521</sup>

As a (perhaps unsurprising) result, the story of The School Principal concludes with the resignation of the principal from his office.

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<sup>519</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>520</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

### By The Pen

Al-e Ahmad's next work, By The Pen written in 1961 after only a few years upon his return from France and England, is the most true to the genre of fiction than his other books. However, it maintains the allegorical nature that his other works retain. This work was also written after his first return from the West, to France and England.

Michael Hillman writes in his article Al-e Ahmad's Fictional Legacy, "As for his motivation for using such a narrative form and temporally distant, allegorical setting, Al-e Ahmad openly admits: 'I escaped into such a metaphor because I had no choice – I was not able to tell it as it was.'"<sup>522</sup> This was very similar to many of the difficulties that Shariati faced in his own writings, when it was enacted into law that the Shah or his government could not be criticized directly or by name. Hillman goes on to comment,

"As for the allegorical import of the story, Al-e Ahmad reveals at least two thematic intents which alone could have made the book a subject of scrutiny by Iranologist political scientists and historians. First, he asserts in the essay Gharbzadegi (Weststruckness) – his most influential piece of prose non-fiction – that the story depicts the effects that historically have followed from the official linking of church and the Iranian state with the advent of the Safavids, that is to say, the creation of a society that was no longer willing to suffer for principles and ideals, but which preferred to pay lip service to past heroes and martyrs instead. Secondly, in an important autobiographical essay in Jahan-I Naw magazine, Al-e Ahmad asserts that The Letter 'N' the Pen portrays the course of the defeat of the leftist movements in Iran after World War II."<sup>523</sup> [SIC]

Additionally, according to Hillman, By The Pen depicts an Iranian folktale that partially describes how those in power achieve that power.<sup>524</sup> In this work, Al-e Ahmad discusses the question of whether or not those who take power in a governmental setting possess the ability to rule according to their personal ideology, or if in fact they must rely

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<sup>522</sup> Hillman, Michael C. Al-e Ahmad's Fictional Legacy from Iranian Studies Vol. 9, No. 4 Autumn 1976, p. 252.

<sup>523</sup> Ibid., p. 253.

<sup>524</sup> Hillman, Michael C. ed. Iranian Society: An Anthology of Writings by Jalal Al-e Ahmad. Lexington, KY: Mazda Publishers 1982 p. 111.

upon means of governance similar to those of the previous government.<sup>525</sup> The story itself is centered upon two central characters who are scribes, Mirza Abdozzaki and Mirza Asadollah, and how they see these events unfolding. Hillman states that, “The very human, everyday details and concerns with which the characters are fleshed out lends to the narrative, up to this point, a texture of credibility, and to the following action a retrospective plausibility that may be lacking in The School Principal.<sup>526</sup> Hillman also recognizes an important point, which refers back to the previous statement of Al-e Ahmad’s. As Al-e Ahmad was essentially forced to write in terms of allegory, “the very form a narrative of point of view of the Iranian folk tale, which involves a personable narrator-reporter who maintains direct verbal contact with the audience, offers Al-e Ahmad a natural detachment from the characters, especially since the folk tale narrator is generally a stock character who merely relates and embellishes stories heard from others. This detachment or what may be called aesthetic distance makes it possible for Al-e Ahmad to avoid speaking with his own voice and merging his own personality as a social critic with that of his characters.<sup>527</sup> In this manner, Al-e Ahmad uses perhaps the most important tool in his own personal arsenal with which to strike at both the Shah and the West: his pen. Doing so serves as a befitting tribute and mirror to the characters he has created in this work. As Hillman notes, this and his other fictional works serve as “relevant engage statements” on issues confronting Iran.<sup>528</sup> Though bearing this in mind, this research will not focus on the story itself. Rather, the point of the analysis of By The

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<sup>525</sup> Al-e Ahmad, Jalal. By The Pen Austin, TX: Center for Middle Eastern Studies, The University of Texas at Austin, 1988 p. vii.

<sup>526</sup> Hillman, Michael C. Al-e Ahmad's Fictional Legacy from Iranian Studies Vol. 9, No. 4 Autumn 1976, p. 256.

<sup>527</sup> Ibid., p. 256.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid., p. 260.

Pen for this research will be from the point of view of looking for those aspects of the work that are related to finding evidence for the development of Islamic political thought in relation to the West.

In language that is reminiscent of the ideational structures of Marx, Engels, Foucault, and Gramsci, Al-e Ahmad has Mirza Asadollah relate the similar approach that before action can be taken, there must be an underlying explanation of why those actions are to be taken. Echoing Marx, Engels, Foucault, and Gramsci, Al-e Ahmad has Mirza Asadollah state during a discussion about whether or not to take action against a tyrannical government without understanding why that action is to be taken, “But you both know that I am not the kind of man to do anything he gets his hands on. For me, any action is based on faith, and principles. First beliefs, then action.”<sup>529</sup> He goes on to further argue this point when he states, “If principles are true, they should not change with the times. A principle is always constant.”<sup>530</sup> Hence through this character, Al-e Ahmad seems to be saying that there is no room for independent interpretation of principles, no matter the times or the situation in which one applies them. Additionally, he has given evidence for the argument against part of the orientalism discourse. By replicating ideas similar to those of Marx, Engels, Foucault, and Gramsci in numerous writings, Al-e Ahmad would persist in making an anti-orientalist argument throughout the bulk of his anti-Western rhetoric.

In typical allegorical style, the first evidence Al-e Ahmad presents to his audience regarding the West occurs when Mirza Asadollah states, “For now, the people seem to

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<sup>529</sup> Al-e Ahmad, Jalal. By The Pen Austin, TX: Center for Middle Eastern Studies, The University of Texas at Austin, 1988 p. 74.

<sup>530</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

have found a new saint and are awaiting a miracle.”<sup>531</sup> This statement, in referring to the West, validates the Nietzschean assertion that when an entity encounters the West, God is lost. Here, and through the use of this language, Al-e Ahmad remains quite clear about this. In similar fashion, at a point later on in the story, the two scribes are conversing with a physician who states, “So, they have started all this commotion to pull the wool over the eyes of the public and try to fool God!”<sup>532</sup>

*Episode Four of By The Pen* is extremely important, particularly where Nietzsche is utilized in this research. Here Al-e Ahmad presents evidence of a clear line of thinking following this mold. Al-e Ahmad writes of a mysterious group that appeared in the city of the scribes thirty to forty years prior called the Calenders. They supposedly brought new ideas to the city and transformed themselves into more of an organization.<sup>533</sup> Though in the story they Al-e Ahmad writes that there was a schism between them and the government, it is clear as Al-e Ahmad later expounds upon the Calenders that they are meant to represent the West. He writes, “these Calenders believed that the center of the world of creation was the ‘dot.’ They had relieved the people of all religious obligations. They spoke in secret codes and metaphors...Instead of ‘In the name of God,’ they would say, ‘I seek help from myself,’ and instead of ‘There is no God But God,’ they would say, ‘There is no God but the most clear Compound,’ thinking that they had discovered God’s Grand Name.”<sup>534</sup> And further, “Although this might smack of blasphemy, in short, they believed that instead of worshipping God ... It is better to worship the two-legged human

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<sup>531</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>532</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>534</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

being in order to attend to his needs a bit more and serve him better.”<sup>535</sup> With these words, Al-e Ahmad has reflected the viewpoint of Nietzsche, that when an entity comes in contact with the West, God is lost in that encounter. On the heels of this language, in *Episode Five*, Al-e Ahmad believes that in fact the way to counter the onslaught of the West is to return to Islam, but not just any Islam. For Al-e Ahmad, the Islam of the time of Muhammad holds the way forward and the answer to the encroachment of the West. He has Mirza Asadollah state, “It is clear what I must do. I don’t believe in these new ways and ideas of yours. But, under the old ways and ideas, I know what I must do. In order to have faith, one does not have to look for new ideas and beliefs. The older the beliefs the better.”<sup>536</sup> As the time of Muhammad represents the origins of Islam, and certainly the farthest one can go back within an Islamic belief context, Al-e Ahmad indicates here that the Islam of the time of the Prophet is the Islam that should be replicated and used to solve issues surrounding the West.

Additionally, in a similar fashion to the quote from The China Flowerpot, a villager consulting the scribes about the loss of his mule shouts at one point, “Aren’t there any real human beings in this city...?”<sup>537</sup> In reply to the villager’s outburst, Al-e Ahmad writes, “In the end our two scribes made him understand that these were the ways of the city, and it was his misfortune that these days the government would grab anything with four legs. If he wanted to retrieve his mule, he would have to give up half of his cheese and so on.”<sup>538</sup> Al-e Ahmad is describing his disdain for the city under the government of the Shah, which he believes has become overtly corrupt. Later, Al-e

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<sup>535</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>537</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>538</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

Ahmad follows up this sentiment when he has one of the (police) guards in the story state that, “All the doors and windows have been sealed by the government.”<sup>539</sup> Though the guard is describing a physical house, the larger allegorical reference that Al-e Ahmad wishes to make is clear. The government of the Shah, under the guise of the West, has covered over the possibility of a way of life and thinking that does not draw its inspiration from the West. In other words, it is the Shah’s way, and hence the West’s way, or no way at all. If one dares to deviate from this position, there will be severe consequences. Al-e Ahmad soon thereafter has one of his characters state, “What a screwed up city this has become,” indicating that the city, as a general term, represents a modern industrial vortex run by the West and that swallows up those from the surrounding countryside and towns with the promise of work, etc.<sup>540</sup> The promise is a hollow one, however, for Al-e Ahmad.

Following this anti-governmental theme, and certainly the anti-Western government influenced theme, in a particularly loquacious diatribe, Al-e Ahmad has Mirza Asadollah state,

“You know I am against any government in principle, because it is necessary for every government to exercise force, which is followed by cruelty, the confiscations, executioners, jails and exiles. For two thousand years, mankind has been daydreaming about the government of the learned, oblivious to the fact that a philosopher cannot govern. That is nothing, he is not even able to pass simple judgments or give rulings. Government has, from the beginning, been for the business of the brainless. It has been the business of the riffraff, who would gather around the standard of an adventurer to beat their chests and fill their stomachs. It has been work for people who are able to leave conscience and imagination to books of poetry, and on the basis of their animal instincts, rule, kill in retribution – an eye for an eye – avenge, punish, shed blood, and govern. However, the main affairs of the world go on in the absence of governments. In the presence of governments, the affairs of the world are postponed. Any human problem which is not resolved by arbitration and personal understanding and in which a government gets involved will provide the grounds for the enmity of future generations.”<sup>541</sup>

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<sup>539</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>541</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

This is very much akin to Shariati's thoughts on the relationship between philosophers and governments. Shariati believed it was his job as a 'philosopher' to inspire others of a similar mind from within the people to assume the responsibilities of government, but not himself or other such thinkers. It is clear that Shariati would agree with the indictment Al-e Ahmad raises here about the 'brainless' nature of the Shah's government and certainly that of the West as well. Additionally, this concern for the future generations of Iranians is a theme carried over from The School Principal and is something that weighs heavily upon Al-e Ahmad's mind.

Al-e Ahmad then asks an age-old question via another character Mirza Abdozzaki: "Then my friend, what should be done, in your opinion?"<sup>542</sup> It is interesting to note that this question appears in Al-e Ahmad's work written in 1961, but that it was Shariati who made the question universally popular in Iran in his own work almost ten years later. Al-e Ahmad answers the question through Mirza Asadollah, stating,

"Don't keep asking me what is to be done. I don't know...I told you on the first day. You just felt like taking over the government, and now you're stuck with it. You don't have any plans. This is why I don't see any difference between this government and the one before it. In fact, we are not living a human life. We are living like plants. Just like a tree. When winter comes, the leaves fall off and it waits for spring for the leaves to grow again. Then it waits for summer to bring fruit. It waits for rain, fertilizer, and so forth. Always waiting for changes in nature, external changes. They were like this, and you are the same, not realizing that if you wait for external changes, there might be a flood, or a typhoon, or a drought."<sup>543</sup>

The answer given here is somewhat surprising, at least in comparison to Shariati's answer(s). Give the nature of the novel as an allegorical critique, in part, of the West and the Shah, it would be expected of Al-e Ahmad to perhaps have an answer at the ready. Oddly enough, he does not. Rather, he only has scathing words for those who would

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<sup>542</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>543</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

speak valiantly about taking over the government, but then provide little in the way of government, governmental infrastructure, procedures, and ideals.

In light of the answer, or non-answer given above, it is easy to capitalize on what Al-e Ahmad stated earlier regarding the true principles that are not to be amended, those derived from the time of Muhammad and the beginnings of Islam. Though he does not articulate it in his response above, Al-e Ahmad feels that the original principles of Islam, despite the passage of time, should be applicable to any modern and current situation that the Ummah faces. Al-e Ahmad has Mirza Asadollah go on to state, “About the fact that every new religion or ideology renews the old worn out quarrels...This is a violation of the principles we both believe in. The times when religions were the main factor in bringing about change have passed.”<sup>544</sup> While on the outside, this statement looks as if Al-e Ahmad is contradicting himself, it is actually a continuation of his previous argument based on the language he employs. It is not the fact that religion itself is the problem as a catalyst for bringing about change, it is new religion and ideology. Hence new interpretation of principles, and not the ones that are preexistent and have not changed in Al-e Ahmad’s eyes, are the source of the problem.

In the two books of Al-e Ahmad’s presented in this research thus far, both have been allegorical in nature. In the next work of importance for this research, Al-e Ahmad moves more into the realm of direct criticism of the West and the Shah. While still somewhat veiled, he utilizes much more transparent and translucent language in his criticisms. In doing so, he authored arguably his most notable work.

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<sup>544</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

### Gharbzadegi

Al-e Ahmad authored Gharbzadegi in 1962, the same year he traveled to Israel. In many respects, it was and still is the culmination of the sentiments and concerns raised in the corpus of his previous works. One can begin to see a pattern emerging, here, with the publication of anti-Western works coinciding with Al-e Ahmad's travels to the West; in the same year as Gharbzadegi's publication (arguably his most anti-Western work), he travelled to France, Switzerland, West Germany, Holland, England, and Israel.

The main idea behind Gharbzadegi was to write a work that focused primarily on how the West had influenced and corrupted the Iranian government and, perhaps most importantly, how the West had lulled the Iranian people into submissiveness for all things Western. As author Lloyd Ridgeon notes, “Gharbzadegi is perhaps the best text from an Iranian that manifests the evils of dependency of a Third Country on the West.”<sup>545</sup> Delving into the psyche of Al-e Ahmad, Hamid Dabashi furthers Ridgeon's sentiments when he writes, “Under the imposing shadow of two mutually exclusive father figures – his own, the other Reza Shah – Al-e Ahmad was raised with paradoxical demands upon his character. These dual demands, aggravated in their intensity by being mutually exclusive and yet juxtaposed, pulled the young Al-e Ahmad in two diametrically opposed directions: one the faith and practices of his biological father and ancestry, representing the old Persia; the other the ideology and policies of an autocratic patriarch, forging the new Iran,” and Gharbzadegi was the “crucial battlefield for this lifelong paradox.”<sup>546</sup> The title *Gharbzadegi* is actually two Persian words fitted together: *gharb* meaning West, and *zadegi* meaning to be struck or influenced by. Hence when the title is translated into

<sup>545</sup> Ridgeon, Lloyd, ed. Religion and Politics in Modern Iran: A Reader. London: I.B. Tauris, 2005 p. 165.

<sup>546</sup> Dabashi, Hamid. Theology of Discontent. London: Transaction Publishers 2006, p. 43.

English, it reads roughly “*West-struck-ness*.” The idea for the title was not solely Al-e Ahmad’s creation. He notes himself that he borrowed the title from Ahmad Fardid, who has produced writings and given lectures with the same title.<sup>547</sup>

Gharbazedgi is not written like Al-e Ahmad’s other works, and that is something which is instantly noticeable. To gain immediate insight into the nature of this work, Al-e Ahmad has entitled Chapter One *The Outline of a Disease*. He begins the first paragraph with stark and jarring language by writing, “I say that Gharbzadegi (Weststruckness) is like cholera. If this seems distasteful, I could say that it is like frostbite. But no. It’s at least as bad as sawflies in the wheat fields. Have you ever seen how they infest wheat? From within. There’s a healthy skin in place, but it’s only a skin, just like the shell of a cicada on a tree. In any case we’re talking about a disease. A disease that comes from without, fostered in an environment made for breeding diseases.”<sup>548</sup> Right away, Al-e Ahmad has established a tone of anger. He includes resentment when he next states, “This Gharbzadegi has two heads. One is the West, the other is ourselves who are Weststruck.”<sup>549</sup> In relating this, he points out the fault of this Weststruckness is not unilateral; part of it lays with Iranians themselves, and perhaps to extrapolate some, the greater Ummah. By means of allegory, Al-e Ahmad throughout the work refers to the West as the machines. This has to do with the fact that for Al-e Ahmad, the West has overtaken Iran in particular with means of modernity - technology, industry, etc. - in addition to colonialism and materialism. Additionally, Al-e Ahmad sees the West as moving metaphorically like a machine, in an un-relentless, uncompromising, and soul-less manner. As a result of his weltanschauung, he writes,

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<sup>547</sup> Al-e Ahmad, Jalal Gharbzadegi. Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers 1992 p. 11..

<sup>548</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>549</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

“These things, of themselves, make it necessary for us to adapt ourselves, our government, our culture, and our daily lives to the pattern of the machines. Everything must conform to the specifications of machines.”<sup>550</sup> In response to the situation he feels has been thrust upon Iran at the hands of the West, he feels compelled to emote. As such, he states that, “The basic thesis of this short essay is that we’ve not been able to retain our own cultural / historical personality during our encounter with the machines and in the face of their inevitable assault. In fact, we’ve been destroyed. The point is that we’ve been unable to take a calculated and well-assessed position in the face of this monster of the new century.”<sup>551</sup> This is something that disturbs him to his very core. And it is here that we have the heart of what Al-e Ahmad is trying to share in Gharbzadegi. He feels that Iran has fallen victim to blind imitation of the West, that Iran has been robbed of its cultural, and social individuality at the hands of the West. Perhaps more importantly, what most upsets him is that very few people have even bothered to stand up and take notice of this change, let alone try and do something about it. In this regard he writes, “The point is that as long as we don’t perceive the nature and philosophy of Western culture, and continue to behave as Westerners superficially, we’ll be like the donkey who posed as a lion and ended up being eaten by one.”<sup>552</sup> In another well-known metaphor from this work, Al-e Ahmad writes in the same vein, “For two hundred years, we’ve been like a crow who tries to be a partridge.”<sup>553</sup> In other words, Al-e Ahmad is stating that Iran as a nation is trying to be something that it is not.

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<sup>550</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>551</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>552</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>553</sup> Ibid., p. 16. Mottahedeh offers an explanation of the origins of this metaphor in The Mantle of the Prophet p. 299.

Towards the end of this introductory chapter, Al-e Ahmad supplies multiple definitions of what he means by Gharbzadegi. It is not that one definition is more correct than another. Rather, the amalgamation of definitions assimilate into one meaning and description of the term Gharbzadegi. Al-e Ahmad offers the following definitions; Gharbzadegi is:

- a.) “all the symptoms that have been created in the life, culture, civilization, and manner of thinking of the people on this side of the world without any historical background or support from tradition, and with no thread of continuity through the changes.”<sup>554</sup>
- b.) “therefore a characteristic of an era in which we haven’t yet obtained the machines and don’t understand the mysteries of their structure and construction.”<sup>555</sup>
- c.) “a characteristic of a period in our time when we have not become familiar with the pre-requisites for machines – meaning the new sciences and technology.”<sup>556</sup>
- d.) “a characteristic of a time in our history when we’re compelled to use machines because of the market and economic constraints on us to use machines and because of the incoming and outgoing petroleum.”<sup>557</sup>

As is evident from the definitions Al-e Ahmad provides, the term Gharbzadegi is a multi-faceted one. There are also many issues that draw concern from Al-e Ahmad that

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<sup>554</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>555</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>556</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>557</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

are not necessarily covered in these definitions. These special areas include (in no particular order): influence and appeal of the West to Iran; migration to and transformation of cities; oil; the religious establishment in Iran; and education. These concerns will be dealt with at the appropriate time in relation to the nature of this research.

In terms of Al-e Ahmad's setting out of ideational structures, he begins within the first several pages of Gharbzadegi. Here he relies heavily upon Marx, but makes a few amendments to Marx's thought. He writes, "It's true, as Marx said, that we now have two worlds in dispute but these two worlds have become somewhat more extensive since his time, and that dispute has much more complicated characteristics than a dispute between workers and management. Our world is a world of confrontation between the poor and the rich in a worldwide arena. Our time is a time of two worlds. One is on the side of manufacturing, distributing, and exporting machines; the other is on the side of using, wearing out, and dismantling them."<sup>558</sup> Hence, he is in essence agreeing with Marx, but is renaming the bourgeois as the machines, i.e. the West and the Shah's government, and the proletariat as the Iranian people. Though he recognizes that perhaps Iran is not truly at a bourgeois/proletariat situation just yet, he acknowledges this is the end they are heading for. Hence, he writes, "Perhaps it may be said then that we've had little experience as an urban civilization and have not yet arrived at urbanization and urban (bourgeois) civilization in the true sense. And if you look at the situation today – when the stress of machine pressure is forcing us to adapt to urban civilization and its requirements – since this is a rapid process in itself but very late in beginning, it necessarily takes a cancerous appearance. Our cities are now burgeoning everywhere like

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<sup>558</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

tumors, and if the roots of these tumors reach the villages and devour them, woe unto us...”<sup>559</sup> Continuing this line of thought, he goes further to state, “Therefore the edifice of our semi-urbanized civilization is not one laid out by any one person, built up by a second, decorated by a third, expanded by a fourth and so on. The edifice of our so-called urban civilization, designed to accommodate the centralization of governments, is a building that hangs over tent posts and travels on horseback. ...I assert that this is one of the reasons the West advanced and we remained behind.”<sup>560</sup> Hence true to Marxian form, Al-e Ahmad ultimately sees that the West (including the Shah and his government) as the bourgeois have trampled underfoot the people of Iran on the one hand and the global Ummah on the other as the proletariat. For Al-e Ahmad, the epicenter of this travesty is the cities of Iran, a theme which will be taken up later.

Nietzsche’s idea of the West as God-less comes to the fore prominently in Gharbzadegi. For the purposes of this research, it must be remembered that Nietzsche argued when an entity encounters the West, something is lost in that encounter. That something is God. In support of Nietzsche’s assertion, Al-e Ahmad writes, “The Weststruck man is religiously indifferent. He doesn’t believe in anything, but neither does he disbelieve anything. He’s mixed up. He’s an opportunist. Everything’s all the same to him. He thinks of himself first, and once his donkey gets across the bridge, he doesn’t care if the bridge is there or not. He has no faith, no principles, no platform, no belief in God or humanity.”<sup>561</sup> [SIC] In very lucid language, Al-e Ahmad has agreed with Nietzsche. Illuminating this thinking further, Al-e Ahmad goes on to explain why

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<sup>559</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>560</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>561</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

this is so; “Divine inspiration now comes from Western books instead of holy books.”<sup>562</sup> Al-e Ahmad’s reasoning behind his thought lies, in part, in the unyielding influence the West seems to have over Iranian people particularly. This is something that will be examined shortly. It does however, fall within the boundaries of Al-e Ahmad’s Nietzschean thought. In addition, Hamid Dabashi notes, “There is enough evidence in Al-e Ahmad’s writings to show that he would have anticipated the ideological disposition of any serious revolutionary movement in Iran to be religious in nature.”<sup>563</sup>

Al-e Ahmad goes on to further propagate Nietzsche’s assertion of the West as Godless, particularly due to such factors as materialism, capitalism, and colonialism. Al-e Ahmad states, “If those who manufacture machines, in the wake of the gradual changes of two or three-hundred years, have gradually become accustomed to this new God...”<sup>564</sup> Additionally he labels technology and science as a replacement for God in the West. He writes, “the god of technology...in Europe itself from the lofty vantage point of its stocks and banks, could no longer tolerate any other god, and was scornful of all traditions and ‘ideologies.’”<sup>565</sup> But, as is evidenced above, for Al-e Ahmad the problem is multi-dimensional. Reflecting shades of Qutb’s thought, he feels that there is a socio-moral laxity reigning from the West. There is evidence for this when he writes, “I don’t know what to say about your clubs and this sort of thing. Mosques and altars have been forgotten, and if they aren’t forgotten, they are only attended during the months of Moharram and Ramazan. In place of all these things are cinemas, television, and publications that imprint the mannerisms and dress of movie stars on thousands of eager

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<sup>562</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>563</sup> Dabashi, Hamid. Theology of Discontent. London: Transaction Publishers 2006, p. 41.

<sup>564</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>565</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

urbanites every day.”<sup>566</sup> He also introduces what he feels is the juxtaposition between nationalism and religion by writing, “Because of this conflict, every elementary school child forgets his prayers when he memorizes the Imperial anthem as his national anthem.”<sup>567</sup> Clearly here, Al-e Ahmad sees nationalism as the offspring of colonialism, not in a rebellious and independent manner, but in a manner befitting the colonialist nature of the West which has subdued another nation. Hence because of this tremendous influence of the West upon Iran in particular, Al-e Ahmad believes that he is forced to write that the Iranian “relegates his religion to oblivion the first time he goes to a movie.”<sup>568</sup> He follows this by stating, “The molders of our urban public opinion are either these movies, government radio, or popular photo magazines. All of these media strive to encourage conformity, to make everyone everywhere part of the same piece of cloth. The houses are all alike, clothing is all the same, as are luggage, plastic tableware, grooming styles, and worst of all, modes of thought. This is the most prominent threat to our newly formed urbanity.”<sup>569</sup> [SIC.] An important aspect for Al-e Ahmad of the sway the West holds over Iran, and the global Ummah as Qutb would have argued, lies in who people, especially children who represent the future generation, look up to as role models. He contends that under the trance of the West, fake heroes are substituted in place of real ones. As an example, Al-e Ahmad writes, “After all, there was a time when His Holiness Abraham brought his son for sacrifice in the name of God, but they sacrifice people for technology and machines.”<sup>570</sup> It is interesting to note that he uses a religious example here to drive home his point, rather than a historical figure such as Hafez or Sa’adi. Of

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<sup>566</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>567</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>568</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>569</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>570</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.

this, he states, again reflective of Nietzsche, “They’re in a vacuum. They have no firm footing anywhere. No certainty, no faith.”<sup>571</sup>

This loss of God when encountering the West must come as a result of simply more than the encounter itself. Hence, there are several aspects of this encounter with the West that Al-e Ahmad has identified as catalysts to Iran’s, and for that matter the greater Ummah’s, spellbound-ness with the West. Some particular aspects are the colonialism and materialism of the West, meaning both the US and Europe. As a beginning sign of this trend, he states, “As disunity has come between the religious establishment and the present government, things have deteriorated to the point that our government, leaning towards Gharbzadegi and encouraging the imitation of foreigners, leads the country day by day down a road that will only end in ruin, decadence, and bankruptcy.”<sup>572</sup> In particular, colonialism draws the ire of Al-e Ahmad early and often throughout the work. He writes, “Behind the scenes at every riot, coup d’état, or uprising...one must look to see what plot by what colonialist company or government backing it lies hidden.”<sup>573</sup> Pulling no punches when assigning the blame for this colonialism, Al-e Ahmad generally identifies the West, stating “They’re Western tricksters who bring colonialism to that second world in a new suit...And this is where the basis of the Gharbzadegi of all non-Western nations lies.”<sup>574</sup> It is therefore the West that lay in the crosshairs of Al-e Ahmad’s criticism. But he specifies “British oppression during the years of colonization,” and the likes of “the East India Company, meaning Western colonialism,” as well as the “United States interference in Iranian politics... particularly in the

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<sup>571</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>572</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>573</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>574</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Azerbaijan affair, where it was only United States pressure that prompted the United Nations to act and the Soviet Union to evacuate Azerbaijan,” as the biggest progenitors of colonialism, and therefore those who have the most to be responsible for.<sup>575</sup>

Another area of concern for Al-e Ahmad regarding the West in general is materialism, and industrial development as a result of colonialism. He states, “This last one was a veritable celestial mission. After all, ‘colonization’ draws its roots from ‘development’, and whoever engages in ‘development’ inevitably takes part in civilization.” [SIC]<sup>576</sup> In Al-e Ahmad’s eyes, with the oncoming of the industrial revolution in the West, a workforce was required to aid in production of any and all goods produced. But he elucidates a point of great importance, at least as he sees it, concerning this development in relation to the West’s colonial enterprises and investments. He writes,

“During these three centuries, we were so busy fighting off the Ottoman Empire that we didn’t notice what was happening. The West not only devoured the Ottoman Empire and made its bones into cudgels for its own protection in the event of any uprising by the people of Iraq, Egypt, Syria, or Lebanon, but it also came straight away after us. This is where I see the primary sources of Gharbzadegi. It is to be found on the one hand in the aggressiveness of Western industry, and on the other hand in the impotence of our traditional government which has come into power through the use of force.”<sup>577</sup>

The important point in this passage, besides the language he uses, the ‘aggressiveness of Western industry,’ is that he believes Iran in particular and the greater Ummah were essentially asleep at the wheel. In other words, they were so pre-occupied on other fronts that they did not realize the destructive and divisive forces they were allowing to filter into their societal (inclusive) fabric. In doing so, Al-e Ahmad re-emphasizes the aggression of Western industry that he stated above when he writes, “I want to say that

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<sup>575</sup> *Ibid.*, pgs. 26, 58, 64.

<sup>576</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>577</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41-42.

the West, in colonization's beginnings, merely sucked the East's blood – which included ivory, oil, silk, spices, and other material goods – like a leech.”<sup>578</sup>

Related to the colonialist and materialistic aspect of Iran's encounter with the West is the dual notion of influence and approval. Al-e Ahmad believes that Iranians in particular, because of this asleep-at-the-wheel conception, have been very susceptible to the influence of the West. In fact, he even states that, “we ourselves are still asleep.”<sup>579</sup> And he sees this as a no-win situation: “An obvious principle emerges from all of this. It's obvious that as long as we only use machines and don't make them, we're Weststruck. Ironically, as soon as we start building machines, we'll be afflicted by them, like the West, which is now suffering from the effects of run-away technology.”<sup>580</sup> [SIC] There is no doubt that he views the situation from a depressed state of mind. It is as if he believes his country has simply given up and submitted to the influence of the West. In fact, he writes that he is baffled by the myopic nature of his fellow countrymen in this regard. As testament to this, he states, “Dig into any arbitrary corner of the country and you'll find that every building's foundations are the gravestones of vanquished people, and the materials in every little bridge are stones from some ancient nearby fortress.”<sup>581</sup> In other words, the people were so anxious to build the future upon the ways of the West, that they tore down the foundations of their history and used them as mere cement for the building of that new future. In the process they obliterated any remnant of what that history actually was. There is no use of metaphor here; in this passage, Al-e Ahmad literally means the physical destruction of Iranian history. And this loss is a cause for

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<sup>578</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168.

<sup>579</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18. Al-e Ahmad later states on p. 57 that Iranians have fallen “into the sleep of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus.”

<sup>580</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>581</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

“sorrow and regret”; it has lead to “a spirit of helplessness and dependence” by Iran upon the West.<sup>582</sup> All of this has lead to Iranians being “proud of ourselves for believing their blind progeny.”<sup>583</sup> In perhaps the most startling example and eloquent prose relating to this matter, Al-e Ahmad writes,

“I agree with Dr. Tandar Kiya, who has written that the martyred Shaykh (Fazlollah) Nuri was not hung because of his opposition to the Constitution, which he had initially supported himself, but rather because of his advocacy of a government based on the Sharia – and I might add, because of his advocacy of the whole idea of Shi’i Islam. For the same reason, when this man was martyred, everyone expected a fatwa from Najaf, just when our pioneer Weststruck individuals were in their heyday. Malkum Khan the Christian and Talibuff the Social Democrat of Qafqaz! In any case, since that day, they’ve stamped the seal of Gharbzadegi on our brows like fever. To me, the corpse of that great man hanging on the gallows is like a flag they raised over this country after two-hundred years to symbolize the ascendancy of Gharbzadegi...Now, in the shadow of that flag, we’re like a nation alienated from itself, in our clothing and our homes, our food and our literature, our publications, and, most dangerously of all, our education. We affect Western training, we affect Western thinking, and we follow Western procedures to solve every problem.”<sup>584</sup> [SIC.]

As a result, Al-e Ahmad sees an Iran he doesn’t recognize. And it is something he clearly resents. He states, “We now resemble a strange nation with an unknown tradition and a culture that neither has its roots in our land nor flourishes the way it did originally.”<sup>585</sup>

The next step that Al-e Ahmad believes logically follows being influenced by the West is the seeking of approval for such a following and imitation. He writes that, “we began to value the approval of the Europeans observing us, who were, in reality, the original trainers of the commanders and political leaders we’ve had these last three hundred years... I meant that since the time of Khosraw Anushirvan, we’ve been suckers for praise, sadly trying to be great”<sup>586</sup> Though only a few short lines, Al-e Ahmad’s

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<sup>582</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>583</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>584</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>585</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>586</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

statement pinpointed the addictiveness with which Iran followed the West. In many regards, the seeking out of approval also propagated the continuance of this influence and imitation.

Returning to the previously mentioned leech-like colonial activity of the West, Al-e Ahmad believes he sees the influence of the West seeping down into Iranian markets in various cities. In eloquent metaphor, Al-e Ahmad writes, “On this wide racetrack which is the Iranian plateau, our cities were always pieces on a broad chessboard, like polo balls before the famine-starved desert nomad horsemen, which they picked up in one place and put down in another.”<sup>587</sup> As the center, then, of where the machines have chosen to operate from, Iranian cities have experienced an explosion of urbanization. He believes that “this urbanization is the sequel to being uprooted from the land.”<sup>588</sup> In perhaps the most direct language used thus far in his disdain of urbanization, he writes that this phenomenon was the first clash that formed Iran’s West-struck-ness. He believes that “In order to respond to the machine’s call for urbanization, you uproot the people, lock, stock, and barrel form the villages and send them to the cities, which have neither work nor shelter for newcomers...”<sup>589</sup> The urbanization of the masses from countryside villages is often cited as one of the most important reasons for a turn to radicalism within Islamic political thought.<sup>590</sup> “These cities,” Al-e Ahmad writes, “are just flea markets hawking European manufactured goods. In Yazd alone one can see fifty years’ worth of the Raleigh bicycle factory’s production. A month’s worth of the Mitsubishi factory’s

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<sup>587</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>588</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>589</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>590</sup> This thought is held by many of the leading thinkers in the specialty of Islamic political thought, from Richards and Waterbury’s work *A Political Economy of the Middle East* to the various works of John Esposito, Giles Kepel, Graham Fuller, John Calvert, James Piscatori, and Olivier Roy among others.

output is in Torbat-e Heydariyeh, and there are ten years worth of Ford's, Chevrolets, and Fiats in Tehran. And then you can't buy butter in Kerman and you have to eat Australian canned goods in Tabriz. I've had all these experiences. Yes. We flee those villages to these cities. To the crowded city jungles. To do what? To watch automobiles for tips and sell lottery tickets, or if we're really capable we get to mix mud and straw.”<sup>591</sup> In this passage, Al-e Ahmad has identified three of his critical areas of complaint against the West, all of which are interrelated. First of all, there is the influence of the West, which is evidenced by the selling of Western goods in the city markets. Secondly, most of what Al-e Ahmad indicates as sale items are industrial in nature. Thirdly, as previously mentioned, Iranian cities have become infested with those seeking employment by the West. It is this migration to the center of where the machines (i.e. the West) operate that Al-e Ahmad believes is unraveling the true inclusive social fabric of Iran, thus making greater Iran West-struck.

Of great additional importance is that this West-struck-ness for Al-e Ahmad has seeped into the government of Iran as well. This essentially created and empowered the government of the Shah. This government, in turn, has been the source of many if not all of the problems Al-e Ahmad pinpoints. He believes that, “This very West, which has our governments making claims to democracy and having a heterosexual Majlis for its benefit, / installs and removes our governments, helps us stay on our feet, adjusts the load we carry as if we were pack mules, / sets up conventions of orientalists for us, and regularly pats our leaders on the back on its radio programs and in its newspapers once a week or once a month. After all, they've heard that the nation is deeply under the

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<sup>591</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

European spell!”<sup>592</sup> [SIC] In a statement that encapsulates the governmental situation in Iran during al-e Ahmad’s life, he said, “The government, therefore, may come and go a thousand times, but you’ll always see these same Weststruck leaders planted as solidly as Mount Uhud.”<sup>593</sup> [SIC] This was clearly in reference to the Shah. Al-e Ahmad then begins to ask pertinent questions about the leader of Iran, though he is careful not to mention the Shah by name. He writes, “Inevitably you ask, ‘How did this man emerge as the leader of the country?’ I say it happened because of the experience of the machines, and the fate of a political policy that has no choice but to follow the policies of the big powers.”<sup>594</sup>

This action has consequence beyond the internal realm of Iran. Al-e Ahmad perceptively notes that the West has driven a wedge between the global Ummah because of their colonialist, materialist, and industrialist actions. He astutely writes that, “I am cut off from my Afghani brother of the same religion, tongue, and race, and if it’s harder to come and go between Iraq and India than it is to penetrate an iron wall, it’s because we’re in the domain of one company and Afghanistan is a vital area for another one.”<sup>595</sup> This statement has merit to Al-e Ahmad on its own in terms of generalities, but he is astute enough to recognize that part of these generalities mentioned above include an area of specific concern: oil.

Interestingly, out of all the three case studies presented in this research it is only Al-e Ahmad who cites oil, in more than just a passing manner, as a reason for the colonialism etc. of the West. Perhaps this lies in the fact that he was older than Shariati

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<sup>592</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>593</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>594</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>595</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

and closer to the events of oil concessions, or perhaps it was that Iran geo-strategically had more oil to offer the West than Egypt did when Qutb was actively writing. Whatever the case, oil is clearly something that Al-e Ahmad saw as another means by which the West exerted its influence over Iran and which ultimately aided in the ‘gharbزادگی’ of Iran. He writes that the “oil monster reared its head in Khuzestan. And we again came into our own as the center of attention in the manifest world and as the basis for the struggle between East and West and the United States and England.”<sup>596</sup> [SIC] This statement is important in that Al-e Ahmad singles out both the US and England as the West. Hence, there is room to spread the blame around for the situation he sees in Iran. And this is not a new phenomenon. It has been existent for many years. He states, “It has been during these last fifty or sixty years as the specter of petroleum has emerged that we’ve again found something in the way of a *raison d’être* due to these very preparatory maneuvers and precedents. Now we’ve become so totally impotent that our political, economic, and cultural fate has fallen squarely into the hands of foreign companies and the Western governments supporting them.”<sup>597</sup> In terms of imitation of the West, he importantly states, “This is what I call tagging along, /socially,/politically, and economically tagging along behind the West, behind the oil companies, and behind Western governments. This was the ultimate manifestation of Gharbzadegi in our time. This is how Western industry controlled us, plundered us, and managed our fate.”<sup>598</sup> [SIC] This is an immensely vital statement. Here, Al-e Ahmad has labeled oil and the un-quenching quest for it, as well as the sale of it, as *the* expression par excellence of colonialism and more importantly, the

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<sup>596</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>597</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58-59.

<sup>598</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

influence the West had/has upon Iran. Hence, Iran has descended into Gharbzadegi full on.

Al-e Ahmad makes note of the fact that between 1950 and 1953, when Mossadeq was elected freely by the people of Iran (and whom Al-e Ahmad supported), oil revenue had little to do as a defining characteristic of Iran's economic strategy. Whether this is in fact true or not is a matter for debate. But Al-e Ahmad wishes to use this comparison as he sees it to counteract the prominence that oil revenue takes in the economic agenda of the Shah's government. Along these lines, he states, "But as long as the petroleum wheel turns on the strength of credit from its revenues and on the fostering of parasites, the situation will remain just as it is."<sup>599</sup> As a culminating statement on the subject of oil, he writes of the West, "They take oil and give you anything you want in return, from chicken milk to human souls."<sup>600</sup>

In many ways, this statement of Al-e Ahmad's is an excellent prelude to what is arguably Al-e Ahmad's most acute passion regarding Gharbzadegi: education. As author Roy Mottahedeh states, "Al-e Ahmad had always taken his role as a teacher seriously and regarded education as a primary cause for the dislocation Iranians had suffered from the original values of their culture."<sup>601</sup> Al-e Ahmad worked for the Iranian Ministry of Education for several years, and during that time is when his corpus of writing became the most critical of the West. By the time Gharbzadegi was written in 1962, and he began his stint at the Ministry of Education in the same year, he already had formulated strong opinions about the state of education in Iran, writing that, "From the standpoint of

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<sup>599</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>600</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>601</sup> Mottahedeh, Roy The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran. Oxford: Oneworld 1985 p. 296. From p. 316-318, Mottahedeh offers an excellent sample of general educational statistics from Iran during the time period concerning this research.

education, we're undisciplined, like wild grass.”<sup>602</sup> For Al-e Ahmad, education was the last bastion against the transmission of Western influence to the future generations of Iranians. In other words, it was a last chance to pass on un-tainted knowledge about Iranian history, religion, and culture. But this is not what he feels the Ministry of Education is doing. He writes, “And the ultimate aim in the Ministry of Education? As I said, the aim is to nurture Gharbzadegi, or to place worthless certificates of employability in the hands of people who are only fit to serve as future suffering bureaucracies, and who need a diploma for a promotion to any position.”<sup>603</sup> [SIC.] Whatever knowledge of traditional Iranian life that was passed on to children through education was now in peril, and at the mercy of the Ministry of Education’s setting of curriculum. And in Al-e Ahmad’s eyes, the Ministry of Education has shown no mercy: “Everyone in the Ministry of Education knows that our schools are training white-collar workers – or unemployed high school graduates. There is no disputing that. What’s even clearer and remains unsaid is that our schools are fostering Gharbzadegi. They’re turning out failures, people prepared to accept Gharbzadegi.”<sup>604</sup> To Al-e Ahmad, this is disastrous. “It is the special responsibility of the Ministry of Education,” he writes, “to help tear down all the walls of obstruction within which the country’s centers of command and leadership have enclosed the country and monopolized it.”<sup>605</sup> Al-e Ahmad wants to see the schools of Iran teach traditional but independent thinking, rather than coming up with justifications for why the

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<sup>602</sup> Al-e Ahmad, Jalal Gharbzadegi. Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers 1992 p. 147.

<sup>603</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147-148.

<sup>604</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>605</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

imitation of the West is right. The “aimlessness” of the Ministry of Education is entirely unacceptable, and hence is worthy of an entire chapter in Gharbzadegi.<sup>606</sup>

Clearly the schism between the traditional past and the modern future is something that weighs heavily on Al-e Ahmad’s mind. But the problem seems to lie in the fact that the interpretation of the modern future is someone else’s. In other words, it is not originally Iranian. To vent this anger, he writes,

“There is no evidence of reliance on tradition in any school, no sign of the culture of the past, none of the elements of morality or philosophy, not a sign there of literature, no continuity between yesterday and tomorrow, / between the home and tradition, / between the home and the school, between East and West, or between the individual and society! How can a tradition that we’ve watched collapse lifelessly have any effect on our school programs? How can a home whose foundations are in the process of disintegrating serve as a foundation for our schools, / schools that don’t know what they want? / But every year, no matter what, we turn out twenty-thousand new high school graduates, bait for a future of every possible complex, pressure, crisis, and rebellion. They’re irresponsible people with no ambition or drive, unresisting tools of government, all willing to play along with anything, timid and idle.”<sup>607</sup> [SIC.]

For this, he places the blame within the educational curricula on the university science and technology departments, claiming that these academic departments only produce “repair men” for the various Western technological products.<sup>608</sup> In terms of ideas, he observes “no new research, no discoveries, no inventions, no problem solving, nothing” coming from these departments.<sup>609</sup> In addition to the lack of innovation in the sciences, Al-e Ahmad notes this absence in other areas as well. He writes, “Day by day, the mastery of the foreign tongue is taking the place of the mother tongue in importance and need for us...Iranian and Islamic ethics, mores, and sciences, as we’ve observed throughout the booklet are becoming more remote and worthless every day.”<sup>610</sup> Ironically, part of this problem is the fact that many Iranians have gone abroad to receive

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<sup>606</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>607</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>608</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>609</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>610</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

their education or a higher degree of some sort. Upon their return, “They’re perfect examples of culturally transplanted Gharbzadegi...transmitters of the opinions of foreign advisors and experts.”<sup>611</sup> He believes that these people are governmental ministerial material. But in reality, they are “governmental deadweight.”<sup>612</sup> In fact, he refers to these people in The School Principal as ‘government-ration-eaters,’ and has no particular respect for them. Shariati, however, seems to be the only exception to Al-e Ahmad’s rule.

Inundated with all of these forces contributing to Gharbzadegi, what is Al-e Ahmad’s solution for Iran and by proxy the global Ummah? He ultimately believes that a return to Islam as a guiding light for government is the answer. It is perhaps the apt foresight of Al-e Ahmad regarding religion that causes Hamid Dabashi to note that “his ultimate attention to the necessity of religious consciousness in uniting and mobilizing the Iranian masses” was of extreme importance.<sup>613</sup> In this manner, he was on even par with Qutb and Shariati in his development of a political ideology infused with Islam. This was, as Dabashi notes, important because “not only in Iran but throughout the Muslim world the infusions of religious sentiments into politics is bound to produce effective results.”<sup>614</sup> Again, but specifically couched in the Iranian context, Roy Mottahedeh states, “Al-e Ahmad identifies one strand of Iranian life that has survived undiseased: religion.”<sup>615</sup> To find the appropriate starting point to rebuild using religion as the backbone of the society and government, Al-e Ahmad thought it integral to return to

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<sup>611</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154. Al-e Ahmad also notes on p. 158 that while abroad, many Iranians have taken Western husbands or wives, and in doing so, have perpetuated Gharbzadegi.

<sup>612</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

<sup>613</sup> Dabashi, Hamid. Theology of Discontent. London: Transaction Publishers 2006, p. 80.

<sup>614</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>615</sup> Mottahedeh, Roy The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran. Oxford: Oneworld 1985 p. 299.

the place where Iranian Muslims in particular “lost their cultural integrity and self-confidence.”<sup>616</sup> Ali Ghessari believes that in the Iranian context, the moment of “grave mistake” was the “nineteenth-century liberal intellectual break with society’s popular, mainly Islamic, traditions;” hence around the time of the Constitutional Revolution.<sup>617</sup> In the larger Muslim context, this moment was at the end of the Rashidun period.

Al-e Ahmad laments the loss of those who have tried to postulate this as an answer before him, such as the afore mentioned Shaykh Fazlollah Nuri. Al-e Ahmad writes, “That spiritual leader who advocated a religious government based on the Islamic Sharia and was hung at the beginning of the Constitutional movement was a symbol of what had been lost.”<sup>618</sup> From this statement, it is clear that ‘what has been lost’ is what Al-e Ahmad wants back as the cure to the disease of Gharbzadegi. He goes on to write, “What I can say is that at the beginning of the Constitutional Revolution, the basic reason for the activities of the nation’s leaders was that both opponents and allies believed that ‘Islam/government based on Islamic law/religion’ still had the necessary social scope to be effective protection or a barrier against the influence of machines and the West.”<sup>619</sup> [SIC] As mentioned above, Al-e Ahmad believes that it still does. He was, however, hoping to rely upon the religious establishment in Iran to voice this opinion as well. But they did not. In fact, Al-e Ahmad out right states that “the religious establishment failed ...to do anything.”<sup>620</sup> This was heart-breaking for Al-e Ahmad, and utterly disappointing as he believed that throughout history, intellectuals had been successful in politics only

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<sup>616</sup> Ghessari, Ali. Iranian Intellectuals in the Twentieth Century. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1998 p. 89.

<sup>617</sup> *Ibid.* p. 89.

<sup>618</sup> Al-e Ahmad, Jalal Gharbzadegi. Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers 1992 p. 59.

<sup>619</sup> *Ibid.* p. 60.

<sup>620</sup> *Ibid.* p. 61.

when they had the support and backing of the religious establishment.<sup>621</sup> It prompted him to write,

“Let me say confidentially: if the clerical establishment had realized – with the belief that it isn’t necessary to obey leaders – what a precious jewel lay hidden in the hearts of the people, like a seed for the uprising against a government of oppressors and the corrupt, and if it could have shown the people the fundamental essence of these leaders by all means of the media (newspapers, radio, television, films, and so on) and illustrated these general principles by means of specifics, and if it could have created a movement for its activities by making room for the international clerical establishment, it would never have had such an obsession with trivia, which produces a life wasted as an ignorant spectator.”<sup>622</sup>

When Al-e Ahmad believed the country needed them the most, and in the most obvious of manners, the religious establishment did not respond with the solution Al-e Ahmad had so desperately wanted. As a result, with reference to his earlier work By The Pen, he writes of the in-action of the religious establishment, “we, mounted on the steed of Islam, were reduced to keeping graves and feeding on the tidbits left to us by Shi’i martyrs. From the very day we abandoned the possibility of becoming martyrs ourselves and contented ourselves with honoring martyrs of the past, we became gatekeepers at the new graveyard.”<sup>623</sup>

### West-Struck

During his lifetime, Al-e Ahmad developed a clear line of anti-Western rhetoric that runs throughout the bulk of his written works. Interestingly, the publication of his works that contain this rhetoric seem to coincide with his first hand encounters of the West via his travels. In other words, whenever he returned to Iran from Western countries, shortly thereafter he would publish a work that was virulently anti-Western.

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<sup>621</sup> Mottahedeh, Roy The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran. Oxford: Oneworld 1985 p. 301.

<sup>622</sup> Al-e Ahmad, Jalal Gharbzadegi. Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers 1992 p. 61.

<sup>623</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

Due to the proximity of travel return and publication, Al-e Ahmad clearly had overwhelming feelings and experiences that he wished to share with Iranian Muslims and the greater Ummah about the West based upon his encounter with the West. It is interesting that this was not a one-time occurrence. Rather, this seemed to be a pattern for Al-e Ahmad. Of additional interest is that he kept traveling to the West. Qutb and Shariati each had one major encounter with the West in the West, which yielded dividends that they would reap for the rest of their lives in terms of anti-Western sentiments. Al-e Ahmad had a vast arsenal of anti-Western ideas to work with, but attained them through multiple encounters with the West in the West and from living under the Pahlavi regime. Perhaps he kept traveling to the West to constantly remind himself of the influence and effect of the West upon Muslims, and in a sense continually adding evidence to build his argument against Westernization as he saw it. By charting, interacting with, and utilizing Western intellectual ideas over time, he could transform this argument into a solid and cohesive corpus of writings to deploy against the West.

The afore-mentioned thread was and is an important step in the development of Islamic political thought in relation to the West. Al-e Ahmad's writing style is easier to read than that of Shariati for the following reason: it is more story-like and allegorical than Shariati's works. Shariati tends to write in a more philosophical manner, and deal with amorphous and esoteric concepts. This is important in its own right, but his work appealed to a different audience than Al-e Ahmad's. While Shariati was more popular with University students and professional academics, Al-e Ahmad's work was more popular with the masses. The combination of both, however, made for a powerful tool in connecting both of their audiences along the same lines of thought.

As in both Qutb and Shariati's writings, there is also a palpable sense of urgency and desperation displayed in Al-e Ahmad's works, depicting a concern for his fellow Muslims in relation to the West. Perhaps most importantly, as Mottahedeh notes, was the fact that Al-e Ahmad was more interested in the "dynamics of oppression, not in finding the key to the success of the West; he wanted to compare experiences of liberation, not bring home Western models of social production and organization."<sup>624</sup> In this manner, he was from a generation of paradox: simultaneously inspired by the West (via its philosophers and thinkers) and politically repulsed by it.<sup>625</sup>

### **Concluding Remarks**

Al-e Ahmad played a significant role in the development of Islamic political thought in the mid-twentieth century in relation to the West. Al-e Ahmad was a prominent intellectual successor of Afghani. He, like Qutb and Shariati, modified Afghani's practical call for solidarity among Muslims. He did so as a means of defense against the advance of the West and Westernization as he saw it into Muslim lands, Islamic civil society, and the Islamic moral economy. Al-e Ahmad's modification of pan-Islam was in line with that of Qutb and Shariati; he labeled the West as the enemy of Islam. As Qutb and Shariati did, Al-e Ahmad narrowed the focus of the idea of pan-Islam to constitute the identification of, and unification around, a common enemy to all denominations of Islam.

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<sup>624</sup> Mottahedeh, Roy The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran. Oxford: Oneworld 1985 p. 321.

<sup>625</sup> Boroujerdi, Mehrzad. Iranian Intellectuals and The West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996 p. 70, 74.

Unlike Qutb and Shariati, who each had a single encounter with the West whereupon which much of their anti-Western rhetoric was produced, Al-e Ahmad had several first hand encounters with the West. It was based upon these encounters that he developed the body of his anti-Western ideas. Like Shariati, it is from a position within the Shi'ite ranks that Al-e Ahmad was able to build ideas and arguments for the interaction and distribution of his anti-Western ideas based upon his unique experiences. Al-e Ahmad used the ideas of Western intellectuals continuously in his own body of ideas to assess and chastise the West. In and through this condemnation, he sought the enactment of change both in Islamic civil society and in the Islamic moral economy. He argued against Westernization as he saw it based upon his experiences in the West, and what he believed Westernization's effect was having upon the global Ummah. Al-e Ahmad also satisfied another argument of this research that he, through his own ideas and writings, articulated aspects of Nietzschean thought: when an entity (in this research, Islam) encounters the West, something (in this research, God) is lost during that encounter. Al-e Ahmad was able to argue that the West, in his view, was God-less and that Islam, via Westernization as he saw it, was becoming God-less as well. This had a devastating effect, he argued, on both Islamic civil society and the Islamic moral economy. Lastly, Al-e Ahmad sought to prevent the loss of God in Islamic civil society and the Islamic moral economy while concurrently halting Westernization's influence through political means. Al-e Ahmad revealed his desire that Islam, specifically the Quran, be used as the political solution to the crises of the global Ummah because of the West. The Quran, Al-e Ahmad believed, should be used as law, thereby permanently restoring God to Islamic civil society and the Islamic moral economy.

Again like Qutb and Shariati, Al-e Ahmad wanted to see change enacted within Islamic civil society and the Islamic moral economy. Believing that Islam should be public and personal at once, his ideas were developed, like Shariati's, from a Shi'a perspective. Four key contentions have been advanced. Firstly, like his intellectual compatriots presented in this research, Al-e Ahmad saw the West as the enemy of Islam, bar none, believing that the West was God-less. Secondly, the use of Islam and the Quran in a political capacity as the answer to the problem(s) caused by the West and Westernization was vital. Thirdly, Al-e Ahmad was paradigmatic of someone who tried to bring change within Islamic civil society and the Islamic moral economy. Fourthly, and perchance most notably for this research, Al-e Ahmad developed his ideas in reaction to the West, and specifically, his first hand encounter and the circumstances of that encounter with the West. This outlook helped to further the development of Islamic political thought in the mid-twentieth century, most importantly in relation to the West.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Concluding Thoughts**

This research has been about the interaction of ideas, particularly centered upon the development of Islamic political thought in relation to the West in the mid-twentieth century. It has sought to illuminate this development using three Islamic thinkers: Sayyid Qutb, Ali Shariati, and Jalal Al-e Ahmad. This research argued that what these thinkers attempted to do in and through their writings and ideas was to enact change within Islamic civil society and fortify the Islamic moral economy against Westernization as they saw it. They sought to accomplish this based, in part, upon the ideas of Marx, Engels, Foucault, and Gramsci. This research argued that Nietzsche also figured prominently into their enactment of change. Nietzsche developed the idea that when any entity encounters the West, something of vital importance is lost during that encounter. For Nietzsche, what was lost was God. The influences and outlooks of colonialism, materialism, and secularism were thought to be at the heart of Western society by Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad. This research argued that these thinkers believed, using a particular aspect of Nietzsche's thought, that God was lost in the Islamic encounter with the West throughout the entire spectrum(s) of Muslim life and government, inclusive of both Sunnism and Shi'ism. It has also argued that the reaction and perspectives of Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad were unique. This was because they were combating the West based upon their circumstances of encounter with the West, in the West. In accomplishing this they used western intellectual ideas in their own arguments. This research argued that Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad were reacting to aspects of orientalism (as later articulated by Said), and somewhat ironically, used these western

intellectual ideas to arrive at an indigenous Muslim solution to counter the West: Islam, and the use of the Quran as government.

Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad placed the blame for the problems of twentieth century Islam squarely on the shoulders of the West. As previously noted, this research argued that the way to alleviate this crushing burden lay in the inception of a body of political thought that used Islam itself as the means by which the threats of the West were contained. Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad believed that it was impossible for God to be divorced from any and all facets of life, Islamic or otherwise. In this regard, the political realm was and is of immense importance. It is hence in this capacity where Sayyid Qutb, Ali Shariati, and Jalal Al-e Ahmad became both historical and political figures of significant consequence.

The importance and relevance of this research lies in the fact that through their ideas, Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad ultimately sought to enact change by restoring God to Islamic civil society through the medium of politics. In doing so, they would simultaneously safe-guard the Islamic moral economy. They also sought to counter the influence of the West upon both of these inter-related areas of Islamic life. These ideas were borne out of each figure's individual first-hand encounter with the West. But when taken together as a whole, these encounters produced the ideas that would contribute to forming a greater whole. It is of extreme importance to recognize this. Their ideas provided a point of clear unification between the Sunni-Shi'a divide: the West as Islam's enemy *par excellence*. Perhaps, then, it is not as surprising as it might initially seem that all three of these figures worked at some point during their lives in the education sector of their respective states. Particularly in the case of Al-e Ahmad, education was seen as the

last line of defense against the onslaught of Westernization. In other words, by working in education, these figures could transmit their ideas to younger generations of Muslims with the hope that these generations would heed the thought being taught to them regarding the West. Working in education also provided these thinkers with a means to write and publish, thereby enabling them to disseminate their ideas to a wider audience, potentially both Sunni and Shi'ite. It also enabled them to display a genuine sense of urgency, desperation, and concern for their fellow Muslims regarding the West, elements clearly present in all of their thoughts and writings. Through lecturing and writing, and working in general in education, they were able to produce and interact with ideas in a philosophical manner, harkening back to, and fulfilling, Foucault's statement that the mind serves as a 'surface of inscription for power.'

The significance of this research also lies in what it has contributed to the field of study on Islamic political thought. Firstly, and perhaps most immediately, the ideas and writings of Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad have never previously been examined as a whole in the context of the development of Islamic political thought in relation to the West. Hence, they are mid-twentieth century pioneers for the ideas they postulated in terms of analysis and for the solution to the problem(s) the global Ummah faced at the hands of the West and Westernization as they saw it. Secondly, the corpus of anti-Western thought they produced reveals similarities between Sunni and Shi'a thought and ideas in this regard. Essentially, this continuity of thought and ideas provides a point of cross-denomination unification. In this regard, the gulf between Sunni and Shi'a has been bridged. This is important because it affords the opportunity for more areas of common ground to be explored and capitalized upon. Thirdly, this research has

pinpointed three Islamic figures in the mid-twentieth century who had a first-hand encounter with the West in the West. This is important because these figures provide a unique perspective concerning their anti-Western ideas. Fourthly, this research recognized the under-utilization of an aspect of Nietzsche's thought in an Islamic intellectual capacity in defining the West as God-less. This is a new element and contribution that this research made to this particular field of study. Fifthly, this research identified a cross-denominational Islamic call for the Quran to be utilized as a political solution to the problem(s) the global Ummah faced at the hands of the West and Westernization in the eyes of these three figures. Sixthly, this research presented an example of a tangible application of Gramsci's notion of solidarity and perhaps more importantly, the use and interaction of ideas for the enactment of change within civil society.

Ultimately this research has illuminated how the interaction of ideas lead to the actualization or realization of a body of Islamic political thought. This body of thought, in turn, provided (and still provides) a window into the personalities and psyches of Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad at the time, how they viewed the condition of Islamic civil society and its moral economy, how they viewed the West and the effects of Westernization, and the changes they sought to implement. It is in all of these ways that this research has contributed to the field of Islamic political thought, and has suggested that Qutb, Shariati, and Al-e Ahmad should be viewed as titans of historical consequence and importance in the development of Islamic political thought in the mid-twentieth century in relation to the West.

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*Additional*

Stamps are used with permission and courtesy of Ray McMillan, independent stamp collector, Edinburgh UK.

Stamp of Sayyid Qutb issued in Tehran, Iran in 1984.

Stamp of Ali Shariati issued in Tehran, Iran in 1980.

Maps 1- 4 created by author with ArcGlobe software.

### Appendix 1

The stamps of Qutb and Shariati are reprinted here with the kind permission of Ray McMillan, independent stamp collector (Edinburgh, UK).



**Above:** Stamp of Sayyid Qutb, issued in 1984 in Tehran, Iran

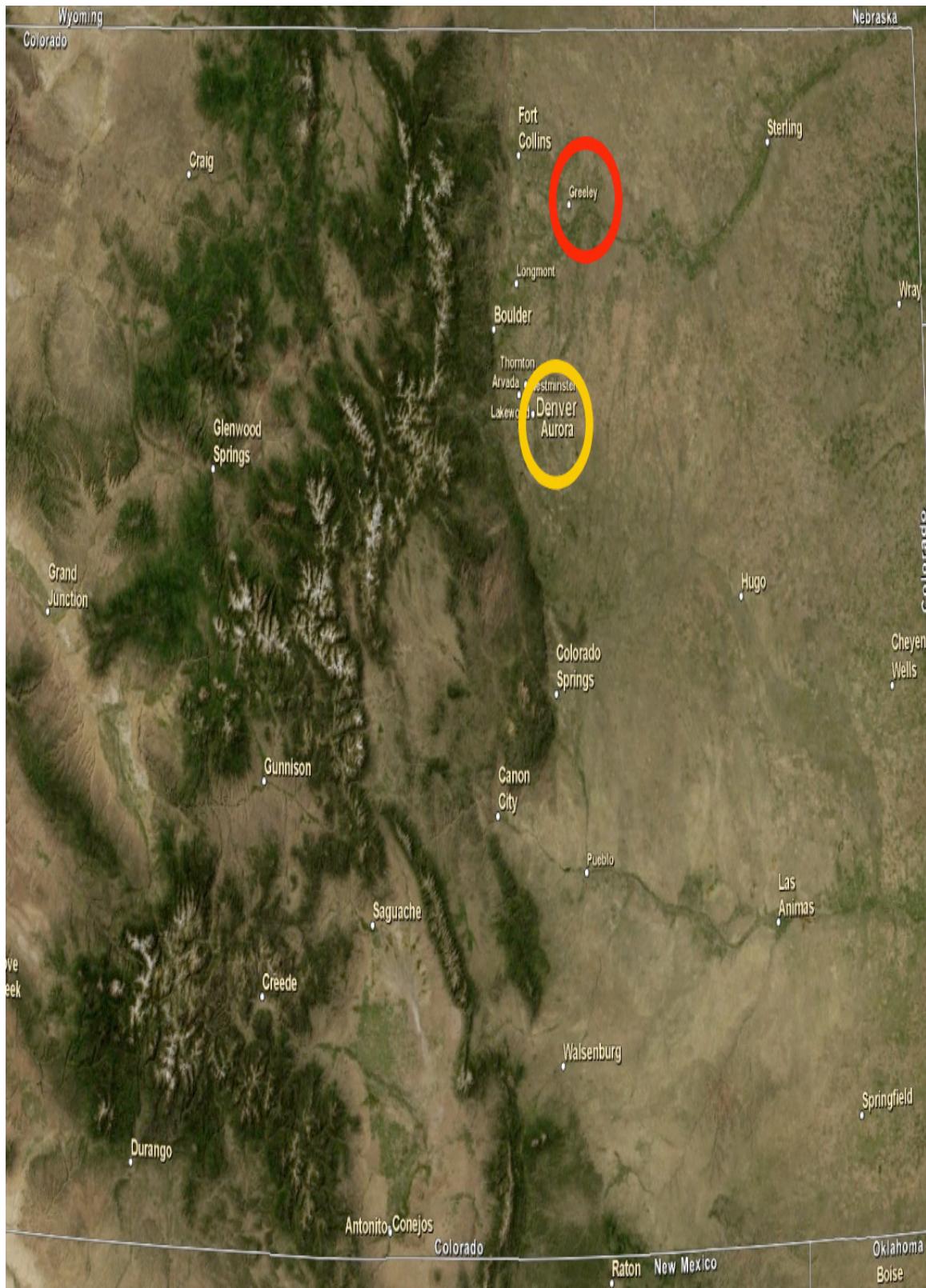
**Below:** Stamp of Ali Shariati, issued in 1980 (one year after Iranian Revolution) in Tehran, Iran



MAP 1 – Egypt: Asyut circled in red, Qutb's home region. Cairo circled in yellow.



MAP 2- Colorado, USA: Greeley circled in red, where Qutb studied. Denver circled in yellow.



MAP 3 – Iran: Mashhad circled in red, where Shariati taught. Tehran circled in yellow, where Shaariati and Al-e Ahmad taught.



MAP 4 – The Middle East

